

YARD

of the ship whose stores are deposited in the
artificial building

E. Durham

THE LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA

THE LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA



ENDOWED BY THE
DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC
SOCIETIES

PR5236

.R76

B3

1818

v.2

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00009991681

This **BOOK** may be kept out **ONE MONTH** unless a recall notice is sent to you. A book may be renewed only once; it must be brought to the library for renewal.

--	--	--



PR5236

R76

YD

B3

1818

V.2

THE

BALANCE OF COMFORT.



A NOVEL.

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE
BALANCE OF COMFORT;

OR THE
Old Maid and Married Woman.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. ROSS,

AUTHOR OF THE MARCHIONESS, THE COUSINS, FAMILY ESTATE,
MODERN CALYPSO, PAIRED—NOT MATCHED,
STRANGERS OF LINDENFELDT,
FRANCE & ENGLAND, &c.

Alas! and is domestic strife,
That sorest ill of human life,
A plague so little to be fear'd
As to be wantonly incur'd,
To gratify a fretful passion,
On every trivial provocation?
The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something, every day they live,
To pity, and perhaps forgive. COWPER.

.....
Qui capit ille facit.

FOURTH EDITION.

VOL. II.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1818.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

THE
BALANCE OF COMFORT.

~~~~~

CHAPTER I.

~~~~~

As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defin'd,
First fixes our attention ;
So manners decent and polite,
The same we practis'd at first sight,
Must save it from declension. COWPER.

IT was late in July before Mrs. Charlton could break from the friends by whom she was so deservedly beloved, but at length she prepared for her departure to her own house at Torrington Lodge, Althea having declined the offer she made her of taking her to some bathing-place or the Lakes.—
“If you will go with me,” said Mrs. Charl-

ton, "you shall choose your own destination; if not, I shall go and vegetate quietly at home, but not solitary, for I shall invite our favourite, Mrs. Amy Finch, and her maid Betty, and her cat."

"If I could prevail on myself so soon to quit Isabella and my little darling Althea," replied Miss Vernon, "I had much rather join you and Mrs. Amy Finch at Tarrington, than go to any place of public resort, I assure you. But really I have been so long a truant from my family, and Elizabeth talks of coming too, and Bella is so desirous of my staying with her, that you will, I know, have the goodness to come again soon and see how we go on, and bring my kind hostess, Mrs. Finch, with you. I shall be so anxious to shew you our nursery improvements! Bella will be such a nursing mother, I know."

"Upon that very point I am very desirous of giving you, or at least your sister through you, some little hints, oddly as advice upon the subject of a nursery may sound from the lips of an old maid. Do

not let Isabella allow this darling child to occupy her entirely. I know how jealous men are of any abridgement of those little attentions they think their due, and which are generally bestowed unreservedly, till children come to share them. The young mother is usually so proud, so dotingly fond—of the first infant especially, novelty being added to all its other attractions, and even in this instance of no inconsiderable force, that her husband is apt to find a sudden diminution of those attentions he used to engross wholly, and he is seldom pleased to find a rival, even in his child.”

“But you speak of common-minded, peevish, capricious men, not of such as Philipson,” replied Althea: “I am sure he would never feel sentiments so degrading to himself, so unkind to my sister.”

“I speak of men in general, and Philipson among the rest. At present, every thing has gone on in perfect harmony between him and your sister. He has always appeared perfectly good-humoured and amiable, for nothing has occurred to

render him otherwise, or give occasion for a display of temper. But I confess I think no man would feel or resent any falling off of his accustomed attentions more than he would. He has always found a ready and willing companion in his walks; if he was disposed to read, Isabella immediately gave up any occupation she might have, and quietly composed herself to work and to listen; she was always ready for a fishing-party; and, in fact, lived only to please and attend to her husband. To do this *exclusively*, as she then did, is impossible, and would be reprehensible; but tell her to beware of the opposite extreme, nor, from making her husband her first and almost *only* object, suffer him to fancy himself slighted for his child. A little good management at first will reconcile both duties, and enable her to fulfil them correctly."

"Well, if Philipson deceives me, I give up all judgment, all reliance on mankind directly," said Althea; "but till he does alter very materially, I hope you will par-

don me if I still think of him as superior to men in general."

"May you be able, twelve months hence, to say and think the same of him!" replied Mrs. Charlton; "and that you will, depends, I think, much on his wife. You can little think how difficult a task is allotted to every married woman, nor how delicate and intricate is the great work of ministering properly to the whims, prejudices, and vanities of her husband. It passes from one generation to another as a matter of right, in a man's opinion, that he is to be undisputed and undisturbed lord paramount. He sees his mother, in all probability, tremble at the look, or start at the voice of his father—taken from her own friends, and harshly criticised and misrepresented by his; and the son, who is in the habit of observing this from youth to manhood, marries with the full expectation that his wife is to do the same; whilst at the same time, according to the received mode of gallantry in these cases, he is deluding his intended victim by an

assurance, as far from common sense as truth, that he shall never have any will but hers, and that he shall ever remain the humblest of her slaves. A girl is apt enough to believe improbabilities in her own case, though she would laugh at such folly in her friend, and though she most likely sees a contrary system every day exemplified in her own family, and hears her mother's warning voice not to be too credulous. But to this, and the similar instances she may remark in almost every family, she wilfully shuts her eyes and ears, or makes an exception in her own favour to a general rule. If she should happen to have only one parent, the chances are still more against her, for example is always more powerful than precept, though both *may* fail."

"Oh dear! what a picture have you drawn!" said Althea, sighing deeply, "and one which I must believe is too true. Would I were forty, and single!"

Mrs. Charlton laughed—"Do you distrust your own firmness then during your

youthful days? Believe me, there are as many and as egregious simpletons at forty, or even at fifty, as twenty, and much less excusable ones. Thinking as I do, I believe you would be happier single; but if *you do not* think as I do, you had better marry: it is a desperate experiment, but, after all, there are very few who will be convinced of the truth of such an argument as mine till they have tried it."

Althea promised to hint to Isabella, as quickly and as delicately as she could, the advice which Mrs. Charlton had thought would perhaps be better received, if not immediately given by herself; at the same time, however, and for the first time in her life, she fancied Mrs. Charlton completely mistaken in her judgment. Her opinion of Philipson, though more implied than expressed, seemed harsh and ill formed; and Althea impatiently anticipated the time when she should be able to correct the prejudices which *she* thought inspired it.

Isabella heard a recapitulation of Mrs. Charlton's advice with deference, but at

the same time with infinite surprise, and her opinion that Philipson was not quite perfect with something like disdain and displeasure. She and Althea so entirely agreed in their estimation of his character and temper, that Mrs. Charlton's somewhat-contrary way of thinking rather weakened the effect her advice might otherwise have had, since, if her opinion was erroneous, her counsel must be inapplicable. So they settled the affair between themselves, and agreed that in this sole instance their good friend was rather too fastidious, and judged of men too much by one general rule.

Mrs. Philipson continued to keep almost wholly in the nursery, or, when in the parlour, almost invariably had the cradle by her side; whilst Althea conducted the domestic business of the family, and supplied her sister's place as a walking or fishing companion to Philipson. Occupied by their various employments, neither sister noticed the cloud which occasionally passed over his brow at Isabella's repeated ex-

cuses when he asked her to walk, or the half-repressed exclamations he sometimes uttered at the litters which rendered the parlour uncomfortable, and occasioned a bustle if any unexpected visitor appeared on the lawn. The cloud was transient, and gave way at the smiles of his infant; and his wife, who looked more at the baby than at him, did not perceive it.

A letter from Westhaven Park about this time announced Mrs. Arlingham's long-promised visit, which she had delayed on various frivolous excuses, till Isabella had almost lost, with the expectation, the wish of seeing her, particularly as her letters bespoke no inconsiderable share of the fine lady.

"At last," she wrote, "I have made up my mind to pay a visit to your vicarage, my dear Bella, and intend being with you by the latter end of July. I have fought some battles about this said visit, but I have come off victorious, as I always will, one way or another. I shall not be able

to stay long, and beg you will not think it at all necessary to make any village-parties for me, unless the neighbourhood is greatly improved since I left it. Althea writes me that your baby is a beauty. I supposed so before—in your eyes, at least. I hope she is quiet. Thank Heaven! I am free from that tax. Althea likewise tells me that Mrs. Charlton offered to take her to any watering-place she pleased, and she refused! Can this be possible? And all to vegetate with you and your baby! I wish she would make me the same offer; I should be wiser than to refuse, I promise you. Pray bespeak me stabling for my horses at the King's Arms. My carriage, I believe, *can* stand in your chaise-house by dislodging the donkey-cart, which I suppose will not much signify. Tell Philipson I am a most patient angler, and shall certainly appropriate his new pole."

The letter contained little more, and this may be easily conceived not very pleasing. Philipson was uncommonly angry at the cold and haughty style which

ran through every line, and her sisters were greatly hurt at her evident affectation of superiority and want of affection.

“ I hope, Bella,” said Philipson, “ you will confine your nursery cares to the proper place when Mrs. Arlingham comes. You ought not to ‘ *tax*’ her delicate nerves with such unsightly proceedings; and to tell you a bit of my mind, now I have begun the subject, I don’t admire having my sitting-room made a nursery myself. There is a room appropriated for the occasion, and there I think so young a brat had better keep. By Jove! look now—there is lady Cotman’s carriage coming. Do hurry away these abominable cradles and things. This comes now of your folly.”

The bustle had not well subsided of removing all the appurtenances of Miss Althea before the carriage stopped. Lady Cotman, after all the trouble she had occasioned, did not enter the house; she only came to ask when Mrs. Arlingham was coming, as she had just heard she was shortly expected, and to secure one day of

her "*young friend's*" company at Adderley, when she hoped also to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. and Mrs. Philipson and Miss Vernon. Having delivered her invitation with an air of proud condescension, which bespoke her own sense of the favour she had conferred, she took her leave.

Philipson went out alone; and Isabella had her nursery removed to the proper place, and sat down to consider, over and over again, the *strange way* in which her husband had behaved on the subject, and to question herself whether Mrs. Charlton's opinion was altogether unfounded in reason.

CHAPTER II.

I am asham'd that women are so simple,
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway.

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

Gold hath no lustre of its own—
It shines by temperate use alone.

FRANCIS'S *Horace*.

FOR one half-hour Westhaven Park claims our attention.

“I am going to Feltham next Monday, Mr. Arlingham,” said Elizabeth.

“Very well, with all my heart,” replied her husband.

“I shall go in the carriage, Mr. Arlingham, of course, and shall keep the horses as long as I stay. Which pair can you spare best?”

“I think hack horses will answer your purpose quite as well, and I shall want all

mine at home. "This is a very busy time, with so much hay down. I cannot spare any."

"Then I shall go in the stagecoach, and I leave you to guess what pretty comments will be made on such a circumstance as *your* wife travelling in such a vehicle."

"A very good one—I generally travel in the mail myself," replied he, very coolly.

"You! What signifies what men do on such occasions! Greater men than yourself have done that. But however, without further disputing, I either go in my own carriage with my own horses, or in the stagecoach, which will be an indelible disgrace to you, for you may be assured I shall let nothing of the kind rest upon me. Because you choose to imitate a rich vulgar old farmer, who buys a second-hand rhubarb-coloured chariot, with a landscape on the pannels, and sends his fat pursy old horses to plough, by way of paying their own expences—because you choose to do something much in the same style, must I be deprived of the conveni-

ence of a carriage, and reduced to a conveyance at all times improper for delicate women? Besides, I am going amongst my own people; and as the general opinion is that I married so *extraordinary* well, pray let my appearance maintain it, however erroneous it may be. I hope you are convinced of the propriety and force of my arguments."

"I'm at least convinced of the force of your lungs, and the vehemence of your temper. Take the horses, however, and only oblige me by staying amongst 'your own people' as long as you can bribe them to keep you."

"I am very willing to confer that favour upon you if you give me the means. Remember my bank is very low, as I told you long ago, and I must make this brat of Philipson's a present, especially as I am to be godmamma. It is for your credit that I should be enabled to do the thing handsomely."

Mrs. Arlingham had lately discovered that this was the only argument which had

any power to shake a resolution, when her husband had once formed it. The idea that he should appear less dignified, or be supposed less rich, when in fact his wealth was every day increasing, was insupportable, for he was at once proud and mean—conscious of his own want of real dignity, yet anxious to be thought of immense consequence in the county, of which, but for his horror of expence, he would before now have offered himself a representative. Elizabeth having once discovered this foible, lost few opportunities of availing herself of it; and though she did not always succeed, she sometimes owed to his pride what her influence over his love would now never have obtained.

If truth were strictly told, neither sister thought of Elizabeth's arrival with much pleasure. The neglect which Isabella had, in particular, experienced since fortune had thrown them into situations so opposite, was not recollected without some degree of pique; and her short, cold, ceremonious letters, written but seldom, and then evi-

dently without inclination, together with the slight mention always made of Mr. Philipson, gave great offence, both to pride and affection. The gay, good-humoured, artless girl, was changed into a grave, querulous, consequential, great lady, angry with the whole world because she was disappointed in her own lot, and disappointed because she expected more than human nature can give—perfect happiness, and found it not. She thought wealth ought to afford every indulgence, and expected that the influence of youth, beauty, and blandishments, would invariably procure them. Mr. Arlingham taught her the fallacy of such expectations too suddenly and too austere; and because she could not command every thing, was determined to enjoy nothing, nor allow him, if she could prevent it.

Having teased Mr. Arlingham into compliance as to her taking her own horses, and furnishing her pocket-book more richly than she had dared to hope, she set out on her journey, with a feeling of more

complacency towards him, and a greater anticipation of pleasure than she had lately experienced: and this soothing interval of good-will lasting longer than usual, she appeared to much greater advantage, and more like the Elizabeth they once loved so dearly, than they had expected. She praised the improved beauty of the situation; complimented her sisters on their good looks; condescended to admire, and even kiss the baby; and flirted gaily with Philipson. She found every thing prepared for the reception of her equipage and horses, not at the King's Arms, but at her sister's, Philipson having too much pride to suffer them to be sent to an inn. Her men-servants he did not object to her sending away, since his own house was not large enough to accommodate them, nor did he know how far he might approve their manners; they were therefore lodged at the public-house in the village. Mrs. Vernon had reluctantly consented to stay at the vicarage as long as her daughter; but Mrs. Arlingham's *femme de chambre*

was too genteel to *share* her bed with any one, and Mrs. Vernon gladly availed herself of the excuse thus offered, though not much pleased with the cause, and staid at home, except dining, when she chose it, with her children.

“ Really, how snug and comfortable this is all about you !” said Elizabeth, looking out of the window, embowered in roses and jessamine. “ It is almost a relief to the eye, accustomed, as mine is, to a view so widely extended, to gaze at a bounded prospect. Here one can take in every thing at once. ’Tis like a child’s pretty show-box ; only I think you must sometimes wish the showman there, Philipson, could just twitch a string and vary the scene. I should tire of eternal sameness so close to my eyes.”

“ How did you, for two-and-twenty years, exist in a much more bounded scene than this ?” replied Philipson. “ I never saw any thing very captivating or very various in the still smaller boundaries at the Lea. Your showman had not then appear-

ed to give that magic *twitch* which transported you so unexpectedly to the extended views of Westhaven."

"I suppose then that was the reason why I was content to vegetate at the Lea," said Elizabeth, in a tone of chagrin. "But don't be angry, good man, I did not intend to affront your snuggery—If you are satisfied, that's every thing."

"We are at least at peace in it, and I'm afraid that is not the case everywhere," Philipson answered, pointedly.

Elizabeth coloured, and turning to Isabella, began to inquire into the state of visiting in the neighbourhood. She received lady Cotman's invitation with great satisfaction, though she cordially hated her. —"I long to mortify her and her proud daughter," said she, with uncommon glee. "They expected to have caught Arlingham—and a pretty catch he is, God knows! However, he is rich, and that is a tolerable sweetener of the matrimonial draught."

"Yes, if you can contrive to come at it," said Philipson, laughing.

“ Oh !” she returned, “ any woman may do that, if she has any idea of proper management. I don’t know indeed that ugly stupid Miss Cotman could.”

“ Pretty well, by implication.”

“ Well, as you say, there is room for accusing me of vanity,” she replied ; “ but, I assure you, from whatever cause, I find no difficulty. To be sure, I had a stout battle about these carriage-horses I have with me. I’ll tell you some day, Philipson, how well I managed there ; but I dare say Isabella could wonder, and be so sorry, and Althea, I know by experience, would preach, and be so angry ! and so I’ll defer it till you and I go fishing. I hope you don’t nurse much, Bella, for I intend to make such dashing calls on all the people.”

“ You will have more influence over Bella than I have, if you can draw her from that eternal nursery,” said Philipson, not very placidly. “ However, your coming has accomplished one great exploit—that of turning the cradle and pap-boat out of the sitting-room.”

“Is it possible they were ever brought here?” screamed Mrs. Arlingham, affectedly. “I wonder whether I should have been so fond and charming a mamma, had I been *blest* with an urchin.”

“Very different, I’ll venture to say,” replied Althea, in a tone of indignation. “Good Heaven, Elizabeth! I know not how to recognize you.”

“I’m glad you have found your tongue, Miss Vernon,” said Mrs. Arlingham; “and when Mrs. Philipson has done crying, and feels less offended with me, I hope she too will talk, and that between you I shall learn if you have any new neighbours worth visiting. Come, forgive me, Bella; I did not mean to vex you.”

“*You* have not vexed me,” replied Bella.

“Oh! then your husband has. There I cannot help you. And do you fret for that? Lord, my dear! vex him in return—that’s the way I do.”

“I am happy to say that is an art Bella has yet to learn,” said Philipson, taking

his wife's hand, and kindly pressing it. He said nothing to her, but she understood and accepted the dumb apology; and wiping away the tears which this act of kindness had drawn forth afresh, she cheered up her looks and spirits; and Elizabeth insensibly relapsing into good-humour and good spirits, entered with great glee into old stories of her old friends, and the evening ended in great harmony.

CHAPTER III.

~~~~~

Marriage is a blessing or a curse, according to the sympathy or antipathy of those united in it. DALLAS.

.....

And yet this laughing prating tribe may raise  
Our mirth; nor shall their pleasantry displease.

FRANCIS'S *Horace*.

"AND so," said Mrs. Arlingham, when they all met at breakfast, "these Pringles are great folks, are they?"

“As I told you,” answered Althea, “as great as great wealth can make them. I know of no other claim they have to such a distinction.”

“Well, that’s not amiss, if they are not absolutely vulgar,” said Mrs. Arlingham. “Have you returned their call lately, Isabella, or do you expect one from them?”

“I believe I paid my respects at Lark-Hall last,” replied Isabella; “but if you go to the auction I was mentioning to you last night, you will be sure to see them, for Mrs. Pringle loves a bargain.”

“Who was she?”

“Why,” replied Philipson, “Mrs. Pringle was housekeeper to a lady of quality, and captivated the heart of the squire by her culinary skill, and other domestic arts in which she excelled. He was originally nothing more than a sort of a gentleman-jobber, if you can connect the strange opposition of terms—that is to say, he traded in live stock, though he did not scour the country in his own proper person, or drive his pigs before him. In this business he



was sufficiently prosperous to amass a large fortune, to which the unexpected death of two or three cousins added immensely. Money will procure a number of agreeable things, we all know, but it cannot purchase gentility, or make the vulgar well-bred. This is exemplified in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Pringle, who retain, and ever will do so, their native low manners, and way of thinking and acting. An only daughter completes the group, and she is just a step higher in the scale of politeness than her mother, and only a step. She is good-natured and silly, and without any offensive pride which reminds you of the heiress, except, indeed, that she sometimes talks of 'we who have plenty of money.'

"A most delectable trio really," said Elizabeth, much amused: "I reckon on seeing them all, and shall certainly go to this sale on purpose. Who goes with me? Bella, can you leave your brat for an hour or two?"

Isabella looked at her husband, and coloured.

"Nay; my dear," said he, "in this instance please yourself entirely, and I know you will stay at home. I think an auction-room is not exactly the best calculated for you. I will attend Mrs. Arlingham, and perhaps Althea can find time to go with us."

"Find time! why what has Althea to do? Has she a baby too, or does she make the pudding and stuff the fillet of veal I saw lying on the dresser?"

"Sometimes I do exactly that," replied Althea, calmly, "and have not forgotten that my first lesson in the kitchen was given by *Mrs. Arlingham*."

"No! was it? Well, I don't boast so retentive a memory," returned the provoked Elizabeth.

A silence of some minutes followed, and Philipson was compelled to hide his disposition to laugh at the evident anger and mortification of the lady, by caressing his dog.

After breakfast Mrs. Arlingham dressed herself with the nicest care, and sedulously



displayed the rich lace, and expensive rings and brooches, which formed a part of her morning costume. Her lace veil, suspended from a rich lace cap, enveloped her figure, and, however improper for the place she was going to bustle in, she persisted in retaining it.

Isabella joyfully beheld her sisters step into the carriage without her, whilst Philipson mounted the barouche-box, and they drove off in high style.

The place of destination was four miles distant, and during the first part of their ride, Philipson amused them with his remarks, as he continually turned round to talk; but observing at length that the ladies were growing earnest in their own conversation, which his only interrupted, he addressed his discourse to the postillion, and got upon his favourite topic of horses. In the meantime, Elizabeth was very gravely taking Althea to task for the disagreeable things she was sometimes apt to say—"I do not so much mind," said she, "when there are only ~~our own family~~ to hear and

animadvert, but really, Althea, I shall die with vexation and confusion if you say such things before other people. I know, as well as you, that I was not always *Mrs. Arlingham*, and you need not be afraid I should, whilst I recollect how you and Isabella live—so very differently. She is just *comfortably* married, and you are little better off than her upper servant, that I can see. I must have you back with me to Westhaven when I go.”

“I assure you,” replied Althea, “I do nothing in my sister’s family at all derogatory to my dignity or yours—nothing but what I am most happy to do; and as to leaving her at present, I have no intention of doing it. I feel myself very comfortable here, for every thing is just what I have been accustomed to; and if we have not much for superfluities, we enjoy in peace what we have.”

“There’s a fling for me,” said Elizabeth, laughing; “but all that I am grown callous about. If I cannot have my own way in every thing, I will where I can; and I be-

lieve we are so agreeably indifferent to each other, that a debate gives little or no pain, unless its object fails. I think, after all, indifference is a more desirable ingredient in the matrimonial hodge-podge than violent love. I would venture a bet that I should pass over, with perfect unconcern, conduct in Arlingham, which in Philipson would set Bella into a fever, or a deluge of tears."

"You hold out a poor inducement for me to repeat my visit to Westhaven," said Althea, "for I see you are incorrigible, and I will not expose myself to the pain of seeing you acting wrong continually. Whenever I can be of use, you may command me, but I will not leave humble happiness for wretched grandeur."

"Grandeur! God knows you will meet with but little of that at Westhaven now. Every family of any consequence but ourselves are out of the neighbourhood, at some gay place or another, and my fine saloon looks so melancholy, all papered up! I'm sure I live as solitary as a sparrow on

the house-top, for Arlingham has just now a farming mania upon him, and there he is, in a brown Holland jacket and trowsers, making hay in our beautiful park, looking as brown and as vulgar as the rustics, with whom he swigs ale and munches bread and cheese. Then he comes in hot and tired—finds fault with every thing at table—and generally concludes by ordering in a large plate of the fat bacon and beans, or cabbage, which is daily provided, by his orders, for the servant's hall. Such is the dainty fare he thinks sufficient for them, in consequence of which, I cannot keep a servant worth having. The men I have with me here only staid to accommodate me on this journey, and then they are off. I wish you could see the animals who are to supply their places. The postillion I don't mind; but the footman, he says 'ees, mom,' when I ask him a question, for yes, ma'am; and I have more than once caught him scratching his head at the sideboard when he waits at dinner. Now to this Mr. Arlingham's



meanness has reduced me; and can you wonder that I grumble?"

"I am not surprised at your being dissatisfied; but does grumbling do any good? And do not you think your own violence of temper may have driven Arlingham to his present mode of living? In his fields he is absolute—no one contradicts him; and he has, I am sorry to confess, a mind sufficiently narrow to enjoy homage, however paid, or by whom. I think, however, you might have counteracted much of that *at first*—I fear the time is past now—with your power over him."

"I'm sure I shall never try to revive it; for as I said before, I am as indifferent as he can be," said Elizabeth, sullenly.

"But let us change the subject, with this remark—that you *will* certainly be an old maid, and *ought*, as certainly, to marry, for the edification of all future wives. By-the-bye—what was that I heard of a Mr. Pelham Wrottesley? I recollect sir Montague Vavasour talking something about an affair of love between



you two, which came to nothing, I conclude, as you never mentioned it. Vavasour had a good mind to fall in love with you himself, I fancy, only he was so persuaded you were engaged, or attached, or something, to Wrottesley. I shall take care to undeceive him, when I see him again, for he is not a man to be so lost, I promise you."

"I beg you would not give yourself any trouble on the subject," replied Althea; "for as he really failed of attracting any of my attention when we were in a house together, I imagine he has nothing very congenial about him."

"Oh, but you were in love with another then, you know."

"Indeed you are greatly mistaken. I could have liked Mr. Wrottesley if he had concealed his temper; but he fortunately made it evident too early in the business for me to take any harm. I remarked nothing in sir Montague Vavasour, but that he was a plain, gentlemanly-looking man, with fine eyes, and a good

tall figure. I don't know that I ever exchanged three sentences with him."

"Well then, he draws his opinion of your sense and prudence—what a horribly old maidish attribute in a girl of nineteen! and your good temper, from others; for I have heard him expatiate very eloquently on all these, I assure you.—Whose carriage is that, Philipson?"

"Pringle's, and we are close to the scene of action, and I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to the squire and squiress of Lark-Hall."

The carriage stopped immediately before that of Mrs. Arthingham, at the door of the auction-room, and she was much amused by the bustle and phraseology of Mrs. Pringle, as she gave her orders to the servants.

"There, Valter, now put your crosses in that there shed, and be sure you be vithin call when ve wants you; and, John, take care of Wiper, poor fellor, and don't let him get squeegeed in the crowd. Gemini! how close the place do smell!—some of the

folks loves inions, I'm sure. Phœbe, dear, keep close to me or your pa. Vhere's my redicool? Oh, here 'tis. Now then for a little elbering."

Mrs. Pringle's "*elbers*" were immediately squared, and she pushed on with great perseverance, regardless whom she annoyed, and deaf to Miss Phœbe's remonstrances. Mrs. Arlingham could not help laughing, as she watched this monied lady pushing her way up to the auctioneer by main strength, for which, indeed, her figure well suited her, being short, thick, and strongly built; whilst her countenance, which was of that sort denominated the vulgarly handsome, looked red, smiling and good-humoured, with a cunning archness in the eyes, which was much assisted by a feather over the left, which waved in heavy magnificence. Gold chains and costly ornaments of every description glittered about her person, without any attention to propriety or uniformity. Miss Pringle was a fair delicate girl, with a look of more good-humour than sense,

with a very round back and awkward carriage. She was as plainly dressed as her mother was splendid.

Mrs. Pringle soon made good her station close to the orator; and many a significant nod received his warm thanks and admiration of her spirit.

"Is them *draw-rers* lined throughout with cedar, Mr. Auctioneerer?" she demanded; "and that vardrobe too?"

"Unquestionably, madam. Two as prime pieces of furniture as ever left the shop. Fifteen guineas for the wardrobe—thank you, ma'am. Fifteen ten—nobody more?—Fifteen ten (To Mrs. Pringle)—We should do nothing without you, ma'am."

"Where's Valter? That fellor's never in the vay when he's vanted. I've a cart here a-purpose to take home my bargings. Oh, Mr. Philipson, you are always so wery polite—may I just ask you to see if my man Valter, or my man John, is there outside? How do you do, Miss Wernon? I pertest I did not know you vas here.



My heart and soul is always so taken up by bidding, I've no time to look round for nobody."

Althea curtsied, and introduced Mrs. Arlingham of Westhaven Park. The introduction was followed by a pressing invitation from Mrs. Pringle to a dinner in the course of four days, which, with a reference to Mrs. Philipson, was partially accepted. Mrs. Pringle then went back to the immediate scene of action; and Mrs. Ogilvie having caught the name of Arlingham, came forward, with Miss Cotman, and paid her respects. Miss Cotman, the distanced candidate for Mr. Arlingham in former times, was immoderately civil—that foreign civility which is the offspring of hatred. Althea, in the vicinity of her wealthy sister, was hardly noticed, and she joined Miss Pringle, who was standing alone, glad to escape the quizzing trio, who had become violently intimate. Elizabeth little suspected all Mrs. Ogilvie had said of "Betsey Vernon," nor did Althea intend to tell her, convin-



ced that her sister would be even with her, and remain perfectly indifferent to remarks, which, after all, were only according to the common way of the world. She observed the three ladies were laughing, as if much entertained; and that Philipson, who had found "Valter," was equally disposed to enjoy the scene. She found they were quizzing a party of young ladies from a neighbouring village, one of whom exclaimed—"Cry massy! what a beautiful little pair o'snufferses! Why, if I had these I should al'ays be a snuffing my candle, pretty little dears! Five and sixpence, sir."

Philipson nodded.

"Six shillings," said Mr. Baker.

"No, sir, I di'n't say so, I say five and sixpence," said Miss Laughton, stretching up her neck; "but I'll go another tizzy."

"Six and sixpence—who says more?—Seven shillings—thank you."

"Lord! no, sir, I di'n't say so—I di'n't indeed. I say, Miss Harrison, we'd better go, for this here man makes shocking mis-

takes. Sir, I ha'n't got the snufferses, for I'm not last bidder. Them ladies laughs as if it were good fun to see me ta'en in; but I can laugh too—ha, ha, ha! So now I'm even. Lord! if one an't Betsey Vernon that was."

This last remark checked Mrs. Arlingham's mirth; and she turned a look of the most petrifying disdain on the impertinent speaker, whom she found to be the daughter of a respectable shopkeeper, whom in former times she had occasionally played with. Miss Laughton, not at all abashed by her frowns, looked as if she would advance in spite of them; but Mrs. Arlingham turned haughtily away; and Mrs. Ogilvie's smile was not lost upon her; as she heard Miss Laughton say to Miss Harrison—"See what 'tis to have a coach, and get above your old friends, and forget old times. If ever I've a coach, I'll look just so." She imitated Mrs. Arlingham's haughty look so exactly, that even the friends who were lately so obsequiously civil could not refrain from laughter. Mrs.

Arlingham, more and more chagrined, coldly bade them good morning, summoned Althea, who was glad enough to be released from Miss Pringle's insipid prattle, and making a passing bend to Mrs. Pringle, who was still in the height of her business, they drove off to make some calls, amongst whom, in spite of her daughter's recent rudeness, was lady Cotman.

## CHAPTER IV.

The treacherous smile, and mask for secret hate.

.....

A sense of eloquence we rarely find,

The portion of a mean or vulgar mind;

And ignorance of better things makes man,

Who cannot much, rejoice in what he can. COWPER.

ON Mrs. Arlingham's name being announced by lady Cotman's footman, she distinctly heard a general "hush!" go round, and as she entered at one door, she

espied Mrs. Ogilvie's twice-dyed brown muslin make its last exit through another. The subject of the conversation her entrance interrupted was not difficult to be guessed, and the deep glow on lady Cotman's face, which was usually one uninterrupted hue, resembling a stubble field at Christmas, would have convinced her, had she doubted. The first interchange of compliments was rather awkward, under these circumstances, and silence followed the first two or three remarks on the weather, the dust, and the inquiries after Mrs. Philipson and the baby. Lady Cotman, however, angry with herself for feeling thus embarrassed before a woman she hated and despised, by a violent effort shook off her confusion, and resumed the cold contemptuous gloom which usually scowled in her ample sallow visage.

She had intended to have received Mrs. Arlingham with smiles of the most gracious sweetness, for she was always fearful her disappointment respecting Arlingham for her own daughter should be detected



by the more fortunate rival, as *she*, to whom wealth and situation was every thing, reckoned Elizabeth; but she had been completely disconcerted by her appearance on this morning, so entirely unexpected, in the very midst of the most violent abuse and ridicule they were all lavishing on her, at the very moment she was announced. Nothing of this kind could discompose Miss Cotman, to whom insolence was so familiar as to be a second nature with her. Her mother rather shrunk from introducing the subject they had recently been discussing; but Miss Cotman, throwing herself back in her chair, with easy impertinence reverted first to the auction, and then to Miss Laughton, adding—"I'm afraid the rude effrontery of that young woman annoyed you, Mrs. Arlingham, so publicly manifested. If I had ever, by any chance, associated with persons so very inferior, I should fly them like the plague, and I think almost shun all scenes where I was likely to be pestered by them."



"So would I," replied Mrs. Arlingham, "if I thought their vulgarity could reach me as their malice might intend; but situated as I am, I can only despise vulgarity, and defy malice and envy wherever it assails me."

"You are quite right, if you can do it," answered Miss Cotman. "Miss Vernon, I think, was not implicated in the recognition of this morning, though equally, I imagine, an old acquaintance."

"Pray spare me," said Althea, quietly: "I am too humble for remarks of any kind, I hope; and as it is evident this subject has already been talked over this morning, I would venture to beg it may be dropped now."

"Humph!" said lady Cotman, angrily. Miss Cotman opened her eyes to more than their usual stare, and was going to make some kind of remark, when sir Thomas entered the room, the only person existing of whom his daughter stood in the least awe. Her manners changed instantly, and an effort at a smile, more repul-

sive than even her frowns, made its appearance on her ungracious features. Elizabeth had always been rather a favourite with sir Thomas, for before she was so much exalted in her own opinion, she had been a gay, good-humoured, laughing girl, with cunning enough to baffle the pride and ill-nature of the ladies at Adderley, and simplicity enough to amuse sir Thomas, by that very defiance which enraged them.—“So, my pretty Mrs. Arlingham,” said he, giving her a hearty shake by the hand, “so you are come to see your old friends and neighbours—Well, that’s right. But where’s Arlingham? I hoped to have seen him with you.”

“Busy farming,” replied Elizabeth, with something like anger and disdain in her face and voice. “You might almost tell that by the look of my poor horses, who have actually been to plough. I soon put a stop to that, however.”

“That now I approve,” said sir Thomas. “So he farms? Well, I shall go and see him the sooner for that; but not

till your return, madam. I like no house without a lady in it—

“For what’s a table richly spread,  
Without a woman at its head?”

And a pretty woman too—No, I cannot spare you from home, if it was only for the novelty of looking at a pretty woman at her own table.”

“You need not be rude, sir Thomas,” said her ladyship; “women cannot be always pretty, I suppose.”

“No, my dear, certainly, nor always placid; and I know some who *never* were either the one or the other.”

“Westhaven Park is a tolerably fine place, I believe—is it not?” said Miss Cotman.

“I believe it is reckoned so,” replied Elizabeth. “The house, though ancient, is a very fine one, and since I have had it new-furnished from town, it is certainly much improved.”

“New-furnished, is it? Arlingham used to protest against that,” said Miss Cotman.

“What, when he and you talked it over?” said sir Thomas, winking significantly. “You see now what a *pretty young* wife can do. Ah, Clary! that was a sad vexatious affair, my girl, wasn’t it?”

“I really don’t at all comprehend you, sir,” replied his daughter, colouring. Lady Cotman looked in a fury, and fanned herself vehemently; and Elizabeth could not help smiling maliciously enough. After a short silence, Mrs. Arlingham rose to go.

“When do you leave Feltham, Mrs. Arlingham?” said lady Cotman—then, without waiting for an answer, she added, “I hope we shall have the honour of seeing you and your family before you return home?” She looked at Althea, who bent as coldly as *she* looked. Mrs. Arlingham, who knew how cordially the ladies hated her, and how much it would annoy them to give them the trouble of providing a party and a dinner for her, immediately determined to accept any thing in the shape of an invitation, however dis-



agreeable to herself, and smilingly assured her ladyship she should hold herself in readiness to wait on her whenever she pleased. Sir Thomas handed the ladies to their carriage, and then returned to the drawing-room, to praise them, and annoy his wife and daughter. Philipson had remained at the auction during this call; and Mrs. Arlingham was to take him up there on her return home, for he disliked the female Cotmans too much to enter their house voluntarily. The party made two or three other morning visits, and then returned home, where they found Isabella, as usual, nursing her child.

The following day brought a card of invitation to dinner for the whole family, from lady Cotman's, and a morning call from Mr. and Mrs. Pringle and their daughter Phœbe. The card was answered by Mrs. Arlingham, who, with Miss Vernon, accepted the invitation; but Philipson and Isabella, who had never before been asked to any thing more than a formal tea-party, refused to go; nor could



all Elizabeth's eloquence prevail to alter their determination. Althea reluctantly agreed to accompany her. Mrs. Pringle was very civil, very talkative, and of course very vulgar, and so oppressively eager for them all to dine at Lark-Hall the following week, that it was impossible to resist her violence. In vain Isabella pleaded her nursery, and Philipson his plan of never entering into dinner-parties—she was desired to take her baby, and he was assured he should meet only a very select party.—“In a vord,” said Mrs. Pringle, “you must come: I von't hear of an excuse. Ve are invited to lady Cotman's to meet you, and there ve can talk it all over, and I shall ask them to come too. Besides, I vant your taste, in addition to my own, in furnishing my new *drawering-room*, and a *boudore* for Phœbe. Mr. Pringle and I falls out continually about taste, but I shall make him give up at last, or I'll know vhy.”

Philipson was obliged to promise that he would go; and, weary of contesting the

point, Isabella appeared to acquiesce, and determined to send an excuse at the time.

“ Now,” said Elizabeth, when the party had withdrawn, “ this ridiculous woman fixing her dinner for next week obliges me to alter my plans, for go I will, on purpose to see the new drawing-room. Why could she not have named a day this week, as well as lady Cotman?”

“ Because,” replied Philipson, “ she and her daughter will be all the remainder of this week up to the elbows in pastry and jellies. Then she will not be easy unless she can more than fill her table with guests. She would not have been so pressing, I dare say, about our going, only this is about her usual time for giving a squeeze, and she loves to collect as many as she can together, and so make two or three dinners do for the season. It makes no difference to Mrs. Pringle whether the company ever beheld each other or no; nor does she stop to arrange her parties by any rule of liking or enmity. Foes scowl at each other, sitting side by side. Presby-

terians and high-church, Roman catholics and unbelievers, sit cheek by jowl—and she would add Jews, if she could get at them—grave old dons in big wigs, and tittering girls—boys with smooth faces, and ladies of *a certain age*, for there are no old women—all are muddled together in one heterogeneous heap; and you are set down to a table loaded with vulgar plenty, which makes you sick—a dessert of exquisite fruits and preserves, which *latter*, at least, are expected to return untouched to the jars from whence they came; and amongst twenty or thirty people, perhaps half a dozen bottles of wine may be circulated. Mr. Pringle drinks scarcely any wine himself, at least at his own house, and therefore does not promote any thing like conviviality amongst his guests, but jumps up at the first summons from the drawing-room, and chuckles at the smell of the coffee.”

“What a delectable portrait you have drawn,” said Elizabeth, laughing, “if one

could but give it credit ! I am more desirous than ever to see if your colouring is at all in nature. But is it possible, that with Mrs. Pringle's fortune, she can condescend to make her own pies, and introduce her daughter into the kitchen ?”

“ Oh, always—she is determined that Phœbe shall know every thing ; and having formerly placed her own chief happiness in pickling, preserving, and cooking, cannot lose her relish for those early employments. Phœbe, however, who is just now, as her mamma says, ‘ interdooced,’ has a decided turn for the true sentimental, and would, I verily believe, take advantage of the first moonlight night, and a rope-ladder, to explore the great north road with any voluble youth who would shew her the way. She has had one lover, but he was a ‘ parjury knave,’ and she has sported *penseroso* ever since—talks about Philomel and the charms of solitude ; and would scorn to hold her head upright, or speak without a sigh.”

“ For Heaven's sake, Philipson, don't



paint my character to any one," said Mrs. Arlingham, "for such rude colours I never saw. I know your pretty talent of exaggerating every thing, and therefore make due allowances, and absolutely expect to see every thing just the reverse of what you have been saying; but other people may not; so pray let *me* alone, I beg of you."

"You can have nothing to fear, even from me," replied he, bowing profoundly, to hide an ironical smile, "since perfection cannot be adequately delineated, or too highly painted."

"Pretty well that, sarcastic sir," said Elizabeth, curtseying; "and now for our toilets."



## CHAPTER V.

The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,  
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate ;  
Yes, ma'am, and no, ma'am, utter'd softly, shew  
Every five minutes how the minutes go.

.....

Disputes, though short, are far too long,

Where both alike are in the wrong.

COWPER.

ELIZABETH was determined to be exceedingly splendid at lady Cotman's, on purpose to shew Miss Cotman of what her superior charms had deprived her. She was therefore most superbly decorated, and sported a dress and ornaments much better adapted to a London rout. Althea had but little finery, and no exultation to display, or invidious passions to gratify; she went plainly dressed, and quietly disposed, with a much greater desire to stay at home and nurse the baby. Elizabeth had vainly endeavoured to persuade Phi-

lipson to accompany them ; but his spirit was too high to go to dinners he could not return, and particularly where he hated the people, and had been frequently treated by them with great haughtiness.

“ Much as I *must* be honoured by being in Mrs. Arlingham’s train, I must beg to be excused,” said he, proudly ; and Elizabeth, piqued and angry, said no more.

Lady Cotman and her daughters coldly said they were sorry Mr. and Mrs. Philipson could not go, but evidently had not expected to see them. Nothing could be more thoroughly stupid than the party. Elizabeth’s intention of exciting Miss Cotman’s envy had its full accomplishment, since she could not conceal her angry feelings, whenever she cast her eyes, with affected scorn, over the valuable ornaments which Mrs. Arlingham had lavishly spread over her person. The mention of Westhaven Park caused a deep suffusion on her usually chalky face ; and this evident uneasiness in the fair breast of her disappointed rival was the only *enlivening* circum-

stance which the day produced to Mrs. Arlingham. Mrs. Pringle talked chiefly of domestic affairs, and retailed a variety of kitchen adventures and housekeeping management, which Elizabeth endeavoured not to understand. Miss Phoebe was indisposed, and staid at home; and the party having yawned over a stupid enumeration of commonplace affairs, gladly took advantage of a threatening appearance in the clouds, presaging tempest, to order their horses early, and return home, where Elizabeth acknowledged that the pleasure of making Miss Cotman envious and unhappy was more than counterbalanced by the misery of spending a day with her mother.

“We shall do better at Pringle’s,” said she, “for there we shall find something to laugh at, at any rate; and I’ll make Philipson go there, on purpose to make him quiz them all.”

“A very praiseworthy motive, it must be owned,” said Althea, “and indicative of a disposition I really did not suspect you of possessing. To laugh at folly and

vulgarity affecting what they cannot perform is certainly hardly to be helped; but to go and partake of hospitality, merely to quiz and ridicule afterwards, is too bad."

"Oh, my poor Althea!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlingham, laughing, "you are certainly more than half a Methodist. Good Mr. Norris has too surely turned your head, and made you thus 'severe in virtue.' I'm surprised you ever smile at all, and shall fully expect to hear very soon that you wear nothing but sad-coloured gowns, and mob caps without the indecorum of a border, walk with a stick and prayer-book, and whine through your nose. Lord! that ever a pretty girl should be so spoiled! I must have you at Westhaven Park, where Arlingham would soon cure you of this egregious folly. Mrs. Charlton will turn your brain at last. There's Philipson—I must tell him of your oddities, and make him laugh; and surely he looks as if he wanted something to enliven him. Why what can ail him? He looks as

sombre as the darkest of these thunder-clouds."

Althea saw that he did indeed look very grave, and not very good-tempered, and was terribly afraid some indiscretion of Isabella's, relative to that too engrossing object, her child, had occasioned this unusual appearance of solemnity. He advanced to assist the ladies from the carriage, and scarcely smiled as Elizabeth rallied him on his gravity. Althea said nothing, but hastened forward to the parlour; it was empty, and she went to the nursery, where Isabella was sitting by the sleeping infant, and weeping bitterly. To Althea's inquiries as to the occasion of this violent sorrow, she replied only by more tears, for some time; at last she said that Philipson had been angry with her, and she thought very unjustifiably—"He asked me," said she, "after tea, to walk, though he saw that the child was not asleep; and upon my urging that as a reason for not complying, he flew into a passion. If I neglected him



for any pleasure abroad, or in other company than his, I should not wonder at his being angry ; but since it is only that I may attend more assiduously to his child, I am hurt and vexed beyond measure."

"How many rocks are there in the matrimonial career fatal to happiness!" said Althea, sighing. "Even the most virtuous pursuits, the most amiable and natural feelings, may become dangerous in this most uncertain state. You have been warned of this, Isabella, and you now begin to find that Mrs. Charlton spoke truth. 'Tis hard to believe that the most sacred duties of a woman, as a wife and a mother, should thus interfere with each other ; but that they do in your case is evident. You must give up something of your maternal to your conjugal obligations, or I plainly see you must consent to his seeking society elsewhere. Philipson is so formed for cheerfulness, and society is so necessary to his comforts, that you must supply him with conversation and amusement at home,

or he will be sure to seek it abroad. Men, however fond of their children, cannot enter into all a mother's anxious, and frequently absurdly-anxious, feelings. Edward sees the baby is well, and has all its wants carefully supplied, both by yourself and its nurse, and therefore cannot feel with you, that it is necessary to see her in a deep sleep before you can quit her cradle to attend to him; and this attention to her is too much at his expence to allow him to be pleased with the motives, however excellent, which occasion the neglect of himself. But why do I repeat all this? You are aware of its truth; and I trust will seriously weigh well all you are about, for *I* believe you are now at a critical period of your wedded life."

Isabella continued to weep, and was with great difficulty persuaded to go down to supper, where at last she appeared, with swoln eyes, pale cheeks, and every indication of sorrow, which, however, failed to move Philipson's tenderness, though it added to his vexation.

“I’m heartily glad we have no company here to-night, Bella,” said he: “A stranger would think I had been beating you.—You sport a *scene* now and then at Westhaven, don’t you, Elizabeth?” he added, turning to Mrs. Arlingham.

“Yes, often enough,” she replied; “but Arlingham never brought me to such weeping folly. I cannot bear crying, and prefer a battle of tongues, in which I generally come off victorious.”

“I don’t admire the alternative though,” said Philipson, “little as I like a face disfigured as my wife’s is now. But come, Bella, dry your tears, and let us to-morrow each plead our cause before Althea, whose judgment I prize too highly to think of disputing.”

Isabella made an effort to recover her spirits, but she still felt too seriously unhappy to be really cheerful, as the half-checked sigh continually proclaimed. A silent evening finished this stupid day; and the following morning, before Mrs. Arlingham was down, or Isabella visible,

Philipson was repeating to Althea the grievance of the evening.

“ You were both out,” said he, “ and I, you know, hate to be alone, so I called to Bella to come and walk ; however, the brat was roaring then enough to frighten any body, so I sat down quietly with a book till Bella had pacified the urchin, and fell fast asleep till tea-time. Well, then she went up stairs and undressed Miss ; and I went up to see how pretty the little creature looked ; and seeing her perfectly still and good-humoured, I again asked my wife to walk. No, she said, she must stay till the child was asleep, for fear Betty should forget to place the curtains right, or some such nonsense. This she pronounced would take place immediately, as the baby looked very sleepy. Well, you know, here sat I till eight o’clock—then I grew tired, and called to know if she was coming. However, the little plague chose to keep awake, and she would not be prevailed on to let the maid nurse her ; and so out I sallied by myself, *crossish*, I own ; and

when she joined me, about half-an-hour before your return, I dare say I was not very conciliating; in truth, I know I was any thing *but* conciliating—and then she cried, and I scolded—and—Lord! 'tis a silly business, now 'tis over: but you know, Althea, how I hate to be alone; and, upon my soul, if Bella will not be a companion, I must visit more, for I will not pass my evenings alone thus. You will not be always here, and when you are gone, who can I find to associate with, if my wife lives thus in that plaguy nursery? Perhaps you may think I could live there too—but no—I'm not come to caudle and gibberish yet."

Althea could not vindicate her sister; but she promised, if Philipson would keep his temper, and return to his accustomed gaiety, to represent all he had said in its most forcible manner, and she doubted not but she would see the propriety of changing her present conduct. This she did: but Isabella, though she did absent herself more from the nursery, was so evidently



uncomfortable, that her husband despaired of her giving up a whole afternoon to him, and therefore accompanied her sisters to Mrs. Pringle's, a visit he had not originally the least intention of paying. Isabella was obliged to remain at home, a circumstance she by no means regretted.

## CHAPTER VI.

~~~~~

If not exact and elegant of taste,

Let none presume to understand a feast.

FRANCIS'S *Horace*.

A CONFUSED medley of voices from the drawing-room at Lark-Hall convinced Mrs. Arlingham that Philipson's conjecture was right, and that a large and motley group were gathered together, for purposes more of economy than pleasure. A combination of savoury smells issued from the adjacent kitchen—servants were seen running in every direction, with looks of rosy importance—and Mrs. Pringle her-

self was actually discerned by Philipson's sharp eyes, attired in a white bib and apron over her "ample presence," and in the very act of mixing the curry; whilst her voice, though suppressed, sounded in their ears, vehemently calling for "vite vine, and the stewed weal."

Mr. Pringle came forward, with Miss Phoebe, to receive their newly-arrived guests, and faintly attempted two or three introductions. He assured Mr. Philipson he was glad to see him; and Miss told Althea that she looked divinely, and had got on "a love of a wreath in her hair." Mrs. Arlingham cast her eyes, with mingled majesty and disdain, over the rest of the company, and, as Philipson told her afterwards, looked as if she would have said, "reptiles! how dare ye sit in my presence?" She recognized nobody she knew, amongst about five-and-twenty people, except lady Cotman and her odious daughters, and Mrs. Ogilvie, who were evidently quizzing her, in spite of her dignified air. Philipson's ridiculous description of

former parties at Lark-Hall was here verified; and Althea could not help smiling, as she looked round and saw about half a score half-naked young ladies, spreading their charms to the gaze of superannuated officers of militia, rich tradesmen, old Catholic priests, and Dissenting ministers; whilst not one *young* single man was to be found in the group. Controversial disputes were going on in one corner; the price of corn and seeds and woollen cloths in another; the old militiamen, with stiff-starched frills, tight stocks, and still tighter pantaloons, were talking the old nonsense of country quarters, half a century ago, to young ladies, who listened with a frown to such antediluvian beaux, or

“ smiled in such a sort,

As if they mock'd themselves, and scorn'd their spirit
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing.”

Lady Cotman, Mrs. Ogilvie, and two or three more dowagers, were in close consultation, either upon caps or characters; but their conversation was all in a whisper, and transpired not beyond their own circle.

Miss Cotman sat in her usual attitude, leaning back in her long-backed fashionable arm-chair, with her feet stretched out, to the annoyance of all who passed her, and not deigning a reply to the humble apologies which were perpetually offered by those who stumbled over them. Mrs. Arlingham's party was the last who arrived; and Miss Pringle having no more reception-curtsies to make, attached herself to Althea, whom she continued to fatigue with absurd questions, uttered in a whisper, and accompanied with a languid simper. The entrance of their hostess caused a general remove, and she went dipping about from one to another, apologizing for her absence, which she declared had been caused by some tiresome people who had called, and who would not take her repeated hints to go. Philipson looked at Mrs. Arlingham, and smiled as he recollected the white apron.

Dinner was announced so immediately upon Mrs. Pringle's entrance, that it was evident she had superintended the placing

it. The party quickly placed themselves in order of march. Mrs. Pringle's middle finger was seized by colonel Dalrymple, with the formal politeness of the old school—he sported a pair of new white gloves, which he drew on before he offered his hand to the lady; then elevating the joined hands as high as her short arms would extend, he put his slim shanks into a sliding minuet step, and led her along. The rest of the people followed in due order; but Miss Cotman struggled hard to free her delicate wrist from the grasp of a Yorkshire clothier, who also officiated as mayor in his own town, and was now come on a tour of observation, respecting the value of woollen cloths. Grace was soon dispatched by the reverend doctor Black; but some minutes elapsed before Mrs. Pringle could proceed in her arduous task of dissecting the salmon, through her eagerness to see that the company was properly arranged. Her poppy-coloured face was deepened still more by the agitation which shook the pyramid of light blue flowers

which surmounted her glossy ringlets ; and her extended hand, of no delicate hue, was busily pointing to several inaccuracies she detected in the placing of her party.

“ Vhy, good gracious, now look—there’s two young ladies together ! and only see ! two gentlemen on the other side ! Alderman Biddle, pray part them ladies—Major Norton, don’t let Miss Wernon set by Miss Vallis—pray order matters better. There, that’s it. Now, doctor Black, grace, if you please. Oh ! you did vell then ; now for the salmon. That supe is mock turtle—Mrs. Arlingham, what shall I give you?—Colonel Dillyrimple, I’ll thank you to help the lobster sauce. Lord bless me ! doctor Rickets, you shouldn’t have *sot* there if I’d seen you before—Mr. Pringle, my dear, cut the surloin.”

“ I wish you’d be quiet a little,” replied he, in his usual under-tone : “ you make such a noise, chattering and bawling ! Gentlemen, there’s Madery and sherry wine on the sideboard. I never drink white wine, but that’s nothing to the purpose, nor need

not be no detriment to you ; I'm ready for a glass of red port wine with any body."

" Lady Cotman, let me recommend some of that vite *frigasee* of weal ; you'll not find it bad."

" *I* can recommend it, my lady," said the alderman.

" And so, Mr. Morris, your *seeds* didn't turn out but *indifferent*, didn't they ?" said Mr. Lewton, across the table, to a very full-dressed, vulgar-looking man, in a red waistcoat.

" No, really, sir, I was greatly mistaken this year in my calculation," replied Mr. Morris: " I suppose, indeed, the *seed* was not sown in such good ground as it should ha' been, and so the weeds——"

" Are you talking of *the word*, worthy sir ?" said a pale, long-visaged, strait-haired man, with a true sanctified whine.

" Sir !" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Morris.

" I say, sir," rejoined Mr. Forster, " I thought you was talking of the word, and lamenting it had not fallen in good ground,

and I thought, peradventure, you might be alluding to the Jews, and the present praiseworthy endeavours of all good and pious Christians, to turn their impious hearts—a measure which——”

“No, really, sir,” replied Mr. Morris, “I never trouble my head about Jews nor Gentiles; I have plenty in my pericranium without such as that.”

“Eh! dearee me, Mr. Forster!” said a melancholy-looking woman, with a screwed-up mouth, and a perpetual waving to and fro of her precise form, “eh! dearee me! what pity ’tis that such things are so lightly treated!”

“Mrs. Arlingham,” said Mrs. Pringle, “let me help you to some curry.”

“I can recommend it, ma’am,” said alderman Biddle.

“As I say, Mr. Forster,” resumed Mrs. Jephson, “I live in a lively hope that in time our pious and disinterested endeavours will thoroughly purge——”

“You agree then with me, ma’am,” said Mr. Rickets, who being a country apo-

thecary, was very often dignified with a title to which he had no right, "you agree then with me, ma'am, in this case. I was just telling this young lady that I always expect great things from gentle phlebotomy and sound cathartics, in these cases of plethora, and I am happy to find you think as I do."

"Sir," replied Mrs. Jephson, indignantly, as soon as the laugh had subsided, which Mr. Rickets's curious speech had caused, "sir, you mistake me: I was thinking and speaking of things eternal—you of things temporal."

"By Jove! I thought I heard you mention a very worldly sort of concern, however," returned the doctor: "I'm sure I heard you speak of——"

"Sir, you are gross," said Mrs. Jephson, angrily.

"Come, come, don't quarrel, good folks," said Mr. Pringle. "Phoebe, help the peach tart."

"Help Miss Vallis, Phoebe," said Mrs. Pringle.

"I can recommend it, Miss," said the alderman.

"Faith, Mr. Alderman," said Mr. Rickets, "I think you can recommend about every thing. Come, let's try the Madery: Eating requires drinking; the system will never go on properly without a due proportion of solids and fluids."

"Too much of the shop there, master doctor," said the alderman: "it takes off the *nap* and *gloss* of your discourse, if you get to technicals. Sir, your health. Very pretty Madeira that!"

"Althea, take some of this beautiful pine," said Philipson, drawing a large preserved one towards him as he spoke.

"You'll find the *apricocks* excellent, Miss Wernon," said Mrs. Pringle, with an anxious look at the uplifted knife which hovered over her pine.

Miss Vernon chose pine, however, and Mrs. Pringle beheld with a sigh the effusion of rich juice streaming from the incision. A fine lemon shared the same fate in the merciless hands of the mali-

cious Philipson, notwithstanding she assured him the greengages were infinitely superior. Very few of her preserves were fated to find their way back to the jars from whence they had so often been taken and returned, and she secretly resolved that he should dine there no more. The dinner was long and tedious, but at length Mrs. Pringle made the significant inquiry of every lady whether she chose any more "vine," and the expected negative was followed by a retreat to the drawing-room. Scarcely were they seated there, when Mrs. Jephson and Mrs. Pringle withdrew to one corner, to discuss the plan for the salvation of the Jews, which ended in the latter being wheedled and flattered into a handsome donation, more through ostentation than any concern for the bearded brethren. Various other parties were formed: Miss Pringle sat down to a grand pianoforte, and murdered some beautiful Irish melodies and Italian songs. Tea and coffee were announced much earlier than hospitality would have suggested, and the

gentlemen almost immediately obeyed the summons. Symptoms of displeasure appeared in the faces of the Catholic priest and the bigotted minister of the high church, and it was evident they had fallen out. The alderman had quizzed the apothecary till *he* had lost his good-humour; and the two gentlemen seedsmen had quarrelled over a bargain, in which each had endeavoured to overreach the other. Some of the elders sat down to cards; whilst the young people, though the evening was hot, were crazy for country-dances. Miss Wallis good-humouredly sat down to the piano—Mrs. Pringle beat a tamborine, till she made her knuckles sore—and colonel Dalrymple, with his long back bent into a tremendous concave, took his station at the hand organ. Miss Cotman refused to dance, and leaning back on the sofa, she closed her eyes, and applied her *eau de bouquet* incessantly to her nose. Major Norton tried in vain to obtain her attention, by relating the exploits of his youth, and

detailing the delights and glories of Coxheath camp, by way of a new topic. She was inflexibly grave, and at length dismissed the mortified militiaman, by asking him if he had really been talking all the time she had slept; and making a mock apology for her inattention, begged she might no longer engross such extreme politeness and amusing anecdotes.

“Come, major, do you go and grind that organ,” said Mrs. Pringle; “and let colonel Dillyrimple try what he can do with that languishing young lady, for really I’m afraid she’ll go to sleep in good earnest.”

“What, was that only sham sleep then before, ma’am?” said major Norton, much mortified.

The gallant colonel advanced with his tiptoe step towards the sofa, which he had no sooner reached than Miss Cotman started up with the greatest alacrity, flew past the astonished colonel, and advanced to the door with extended hand, to receive two gentlemen, whom she had just perceived as her beau marched up so stately. The

colonel pulled down his ruffles and pulled up his stock, and cast his large obtruding eyes on the smart young men, who were now surrounded by ladies.

These gentlemen were George Vernon and sir Montague Vavasour, whom he had taken the liberty, he said, of introducing thus late to Mrs. Pringle.

The good lady was delighted at the acquisition—a title possessing many and mighty charms for her, particularly when she looked at her daughter.

Mrs. Arlingham found they had just come from Westhaven, and, with the most fashionable indifference, coldly asked whether her husband was alive, and what he was doing?

“Doing!” replied George Vernon, “why, farming as assiduously as if his bread depended on his crops, and making love to his pretty harvest girls as gaily as if he was not married. Faith! if I were you, Bess, I should go and look after him. By-the-bye, that same farming is a pretty employ-

ment, and I shall certainly plough up Adlerley Park some of these days."

Miss Cotman was instantly all rurality, and highly approved the idea. Her tongue was now set free, and the sleeping automaton became animated and talkative.

Major Norton was lost in astonishment. — "Lauk!" said he, with a foolish laugh, "she can talk though!"

In the meantime, sir Montague Vavasour had not been idle in claiming a prior acquaintance with Althea, with whom it was very evident he was a good deal charmed. Mrs. Arlingham, who was delighted to mortify the rest of the expectant misses, and their equally-expectant mammas, and pleased to see Althea selected by a man of rank and fashion, contrived to attach him wholly to her party. Althea, however, who cared neither for him nor his title, and was rather annoyed by the attention he paid her, gladly acceded to a request of Miss Pringle, that she would go and look at some curious prints in her dressing-room. She repented her compliance; for no sooner

had they closed the door, than Phœbe began to question her about love and lovers, and, with a deluge of tears, confessed her own attachment to this very sir Montague Vavasour, whom she had met and distinguished at Worthing the year before.

“But, alas! my sweet friend,” continued the love-lorn maiden, “it is you he prefers—you, who seem not to notice him the least. I fainted the moment I saw him; but, fortunately, the servants were in a bustle about supper and these newly-arrived strangers, and did not observe me; so I just fainted a little, and recovered unperceived and without detection. Oh! how melancholy a thing is a too tender heart! You know not the exquisite delight of wandering half broken-hearted, in a moonlight eve, listening to *Philomel’s* song, and repeating sonnets.”

To such a jumble of misery and delight Althea knew not what to reply. She however assured Miss Pringle that *she* had no claims, nor wished for any, on sir Mon-

tague Vavasour, and therefore begged she would be easy on her account.

“ But you know him—’tis evident this is not a first interview,” replied Phœbe; “ and, ah me! it is but too evident he admires you, and I am undone.”

“ I knew him before this evening, certainly,” said Althea; “ but as I am by no means charmed with him, nor see any visible signs of his being so with me, you have nothing to fear on my account, and I very willingly leave the field of conquest open to you, and heartily wish you success.”

Phœbe embraced Althea as ardently as if certain of the conquest she meditated; and wiping her eyes, she drew her fair locks sentimentally on one side, put on a languishing look of mock resignation, and accompanied her friend, as she chose to call her, to the drawing-room, just as the party was leaving it for the supper-table. Sir Montague immediately came forward, and offered Althea his arm. Fearful of a scene

of folly on Miss Pringle's part, she introduced her to the baronet, who offering her a similar mark of attention, they followed the rest quietly; and the hour being already late, and many of the party having some miles to travel, they sat but little time at table before the carriages were ordered, and they dispersed.

CHAPTER VII.

~~~~~

—————Social friends,  
Attun'd to happy unison of soul,

—————  
Now call'd abroad, enjoy the falling day.

THOMSON.

THEY found Isabella, at a late hour, still seated in the parlour, awaiting their return, looking not very gay. This was the first visit Philipson had ever paid without her since their marriage, and she felt uncomfortable, though she owned the folly of feel-

ing so, particularly as he had gone to Mrs. Pringle's more in compliance with Elizabeth's wishes than his own inclination.

"Still up, Bella?" said Philipson, as he entered—"I hope this is a compliment to your sisters only, as I shall never require such a one paid to myself. I consider a wife sitting up for her husband rather as a covert reproof than a mark of attention, and never wish it done for me."

"I hope," replied she, "you will not often give me an opportunity of doing it. I have been so long accustomed to your society, I cannot help missing it painfully."

"Oh! I cannot say much about that," answered he, carelessly—"I find a visit sometimes pleasant enough; and, faith, while I keep to squire Pringle's, you never need expect to see me come home drunk."

"Well but, Bella, what did you think of the sudden appearance of your two beaux?" said Mrs. Arlingham. "George told us he had been here. And what do you think of sir Montague Vavasour?"

"I was pretty much surprised, as you

may imagine," returned Isabella. "As to sir Montague, he is a plain, gentlemanly-looking man, not much given to talk, I fancy; but he is a charming creature too, for he did so admire Althea."

"Which Althea?" said Philipson, archly.

"Why, my Althea, to be sure. My sister was not here, you know."

"Nay, I did not know but he might speak of her. I know he thinks of her sometimes."

"I wish he would think of her to some purpose," replied Isabella: "Such a wife as Althea would make ought not to be so long unmarried."

"Thank you, my dear," said Althea, laughing; "but I see enough of that blessed state to keep out of it as long as I can. 'Tis very odd people cannot fall into a trap themselves without wanting to pull their neighbours after them. But, however, I am much too tired to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of matrimony to-



night. So farewell!—Oh, by-the bye, the gentlemen breakfast with you to-morrow, and I believe my mother with them. They are gone to the Lea to-night.”

“Now, Althea,” said Mrs. Arlingham in the morning, “do put on a becoming cap, and try its effect on Vavasour. I’m sure you may conquer him, if you choose to try.”

“But it is my cap you are trying to promote to that honour,” replied Althea: “If I am to do the mischief, I should not choose to be indebted to my milliner for any of her assistance.”

“No vanity in that whatever. But you look so well in a cap—so much better than with only your hair. Come now, this lace mob.”

The obstinate Althea quietly put down the lace mob, dressed her light brown hair with her usual neat negligence, and refused to make any other change in her appearance than that of a white gown for a coloured one. Elizabeth could not add a single comb or ornament of any kind,

though she accused Althea of shewing ten times more vanity in not wearing any.

Sir Montague drove Mrs. Vernon in his curricule to the vicarage, George riding on horseback. The baronet made many apologies for intruding himself into a family-party, but imputed all the blame to his friend George, who had almost forced him from Westhaven.

“Your next visit to our humble abode will be from choice, I trust, sir Montague,” said Philipson, “not compulsion. We are obliged to Mr. Vernon for having compelled your first visit, but should be mortified if he were obliged to do so a second time.”

“Nay, now you go too far, sir,” replied the baronet, colouring with the consciousness of being glad enough to be so compelled: “I talked not of compulsion; but still you know, a stranger to yourself and Mrs. Philipson——”

“And me and Althea,” interrupted Elizabeth, smiling.

“Let us forget we are strangers for the future,” said Philipson, politely.

"Most willingly," replied sir Montague.

"You are absolutely making a little paradise of this place, Ned," said Vernon; "but I doubt it is not all done for nothing—eh?"

"No, you may swear that," answered Edward—"I mean, however, to make Fairfield pay for Feltham one of these days. Hang that old man, how he holds out!"

"I don't much approve of your plan, though," said Mr. Vernon. "In the first place, you have not yet got Fairfield; and in the next, you will, most probably, not continue here when you do get it."

"Certainly not; but as I may perhaps wait for that drowzy old gentleman's demise good part of my life, and that the best part, I cannot bear the idea of living in the midst of confusion and disorder. If I have only a nutshell, it must be ornamented and beautiful. I must shew you all my improvements after breakfast. I wish I could get a little land, and turn farmer."

"That would complete every thing, to be sure," said George. "Be quiet whilst

you are well. Let workmen alone till Fairfield is your own; and believe me, a gentleman-farmer seldom makes that sort of amusement profitable."

"Many thanks for your excellent advice," said Philipson, bowing ironically to Vernon.

Althea did not like the expression of either gentleman's countenance, and was very well aware that no real cordiality subsisted between them. Breakfast being ended, she proposed a walk round the shrubbery, in hopes of turning the conversation. Mrs. Vernon had not lately seen much of Isabella or the baby, for since Mrs. Arlingham's arrival, they had been a good deal engaged in visiting; she therefore declined walking, and the two sisters, with the gentlemen, sallied forth. Mrs. Vernon was too anxious, too much interested in her children's happiness, not to have observed that Isabella's brow was more clouded of late than it used to be, and she watched narrowly for the cause; but she was too sensible a woman, and too well acquainted



with the temper of men in general, to hazard any remark, even when she detected the little asperities which were now too frequently visible. Neither did she choose to venture any inquiry to her daughter, for she knew that such questions more commonly did harm than good, by pointing out faults in a husband which were better hid. Young wives, when they first begin to wake from their *visions* of happiness, and to find something of disappointment attend their brilliant hopes, are easily led, by injudicious observations in other people, to fancy themselves miserable and ill-treated, and behaving at once as if they were so, confirm the evil they at first only imagined. A look of compassion, a word of pity, improperly bestowed by others, magnify fancied slights into real offences; and instances are not rare where a young wife, thus situated, has been made to think herself ill used and unhappy, by the imprudent, though tender anxiety, of an ill-judging parent or friend.

All this Mrs. Vernon felt; and though



she saw that Isabella had that to say which was brooding in her mind, she resolutely refrained from asking a question, or making a remark which could lead to it, and kept her in constant conversation upon other and gayer topics, till the walking party returned.

Philipson was in a worse temper than when he went out, for George Vernon had, he thought, been impertinent, and too forward in offering his opinion and advice. Mrs. Arlingham was not best pleased to find that her husband intended to come for her the following week. Sir Montague was more and more charmed with Althea, but not quite satisfied with her calm and cold politeness, which evinced nothing like a return of admiration. Althea, on the whole, was the only one not discontented; and as she had formed no plans, and quarrelled with no one, she returned as tranquil as she set out. Philipson was too hospitable to suffer his transient pique against Vernon to prevent his keeping the whole party to dinner. Isabella found it impos-

sible to absent herself from the company, and Philipson was therefore in good-humour; and hoped, as Althea was perfectly safe and well after being left to her nurse's sole care for some hours, that his wife would be satisfied to entrust her so again, and not make every other person secondary to her child.

“Do let us be rural and vulgar for once, and drink tea and a syllabub on the lawn,” said Elizabeth. “Nobody will come here this evening, I dare say, for I know the Cotmans have a party, and the Pringles——”

“Well, who would feel vulgar, or, if they did, who would feel embarrassed at it, in the company of the Pringles?” said Philipson. “Not that I think it at all unlikely but they may come, for I saw some languishing glances cast at you, sir Montague, from that quarter last night. The fair Phœbe was indeed so very expressive in her looks, that I ventured to ask her if she had ever seen you before; and she clasped her hands, and turned up her eyes like a duck in rainy weather, and exclaim-

ed with a sigh that blew the powder out of colonel 'Dillyrimple's' hair—"Oh, my God! yes!"

"You colour too highly, Philipson," said sir Montague.

"Not higher than you do, however," said Vernon, alluding to the burning cheeks of the baronet.

"I think I recollect dancing one evening with a young lady of that name at Worthing," resumed the baronet; "but really, had any one asked me last night if I had ever seen Miss Pringle before, I should, without any gesticulation, have said no."

"You are an ungrateful man," said Althea, smiling.

"Althea could tell an amusing tale, I suspect, if she pleased," said Mrs. Arlingham. "Come, Althea, let us have the whole languishing confidential detail."

Althea, however, kept Phoebe's secret better than she would herself have done; and, in order to escape further teasing, ran off to assist in preparing the syllabub.

The tea-things were quickly set out on

the lawn, and the party gaily assembled round the table, and enjoyed themselves free from all molestation. In due time the syllabub followed; but, alas! no longer unobserved. Just as the glasses were filled, and Elizabeth was voting Miss Pringle as a toast, Mrs. Pringle's old coach rolled by, and, without a single inquiry of the servant, who immediately went to the gate, out got that lady and her daughter, and walked directly up to the party, who, spite of their vexation, could not help laughing at the contrast between the jolly dame and her pale-faced, round-backed, thread-paper daughter, whose audible sighs and languishing look of sensibility nearly conquered Althea's gravity.

“Vell, now this is delightful!” exclaimed Mrs. Pringle; “ve see you all from the road; and as I vas desirous to know how you got home last night, I could not resist the pleasure of coming in; and *suleybub* under the cow, too! vell, this is good.”

“Don't I look wretchedly to-night?” said Phœbe, in a whisper, to Althea. “You



have no idea of the agitation of my mind when I found Mrs. Pringle was determined to come in; for, ah! my sweet friend, I saw *him* in the group assembled here. The eyes of love are always open: I'm sure mine are, for not once did I close them during this last tedious night."

"I think, sir," said Mrs. Pringle, turning to sir Montague Vavasour, "my daughter says she had the pleasure of seeing of you at Vorthing last season. I was not there, but Phœbe recollected you im-  
megently."

Sir Montague muttered something about the honour, &c. and Miss Pringle whispered to Althea—"Who could forget?" and then turned so affected a glance on the object of her fancied attachment, that he could bear no more, but jumping up, declared he saw nurse and the baby, and that he had not had a nursing-bout that day. Philipson laughed without restraint, for he knew the little girl had been in bed a long time, and that the poor persecuted baronet was really only anxious to fly from



such an inundation of folly, which boded much future quizzing.

The ladies staid so late, that Mrs. Philipson was obliged, in mere civility, to ask them to stay supper; and thus sir Montague was compelled to endure Mrs. Pringle's vulgarity and her daughter's absurdities, though his manners, unusually grave and reserved, might have convinced both that nothing was further from his intention than any return of Miss Phœbe's evident passion. Mrs. Pringle tried in vain to engage him and the party to dine at Lark-Hall. Sir Montague coldly pleaded his intention of leaving the country in a day or two, though a week after he was still lingering there.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The jealous doubts, the alternate hopes and fears, attendant on the passion of love, are dear to the lover while his passion lasts; but when that subsides, as subside it must, his taste for altercation ceases. The proverb which favours the quarrels of lovers may prove fatal to the happiness of husbands; and woe be to the wife who puts her faith in it!

*Modern Griselda.*

ANOTHER week passed on in what Isabella and Althea called a state of unsettled bustle. Vernon and the baronet, who became every day more enamoured of Althea, still remained at the Lea, though every day talking of a removal. At the end of that time Mr. Arlingham came to the vicarage for a day or two, previous to taking home his wife, a visit very little desired by Philipson, who had no sort of regard for his rich brother-in-law, who not unfrequently made him feel all the difference of situation and the horrors of dependence. That

Philipson was in some measure dependent on Arlingham cannot be denied, since on the expected living of Fairfield rested all his hopes of riches, and he had indeed acted, upon the certainty of possessing it, not very judiciously. Arlingham had always evaded giving any direct promise of this living, but he presumed on his patronage to offer frequent advice, and that in a tone of more authority than delicacy, and the fear of giving serious offence induced Philipson to listen in silence, though he did not often follow it.

Mr. and Mrs. Arlingham met with a degree of cold civility, which equally surprised all the rest of the family, and gave sensible pain to Mrs. Vernon, who saw in these manners convincing symptoms of much domestic uneasiness. She scarcely knew where to fix the fault, for each seemed alike frigid and indifferent; and if Elizabeth had ever possessed any great influence over him, she had entirely lost it. Contradiction seemed the order of the day; and, without amounting to an actual quarrel, they

appeared to be almost always on the verge of one, and kept every body else in a fright for what was to follow.

“How long do you intend to stay here, Mr. Arlingham?” said his wife.

“Only a day or two,” he replied. “This is Wednesday—I must be home on Saturday at the latest, and must therefore go from hence on Friday. Harvest is coming on, and I cannot be absent.”

“What a pity it is you are not *obliged* to follow this genteel employment you have chosen!” replied Elizabeth. “I’m sure a good fortune is thrown away on you, for you have no enjoyment in it: you are ignorant of the true value of fortune and situation. However, I cannot go this week; I dine at lady Cotman’s on Friday, to meet Vavasour and a party.”

“As you please—only *I* go on Friday, and in my own carriage. I came by the mail, and you can return in it when you think proper. Don’t let us dispute the matter—before our friends at least; you know my determination, and I shall not



change a tittle. Philipson, shall we walk?"

"Who would ever have believed it possible that this man should ever have turned out such a bear?" said Elizabeth, when the gentlemen had gone away. "The mail truly! I think so indeed!"

"And who would have expected that Elizabeth Vernon would have so completely changed *her* nature too!" said Mrs. Vernon, with a sigh of regret. "How little did I think you had such a spirit of anger and opposition in you, or that a change of situation could so entirely have altered what appeared your real character! I have hitherto kept silence on this topic, my dear, because I think, in general, advice does more harm to irritable tempers than good, but I must say in this instance I think you very wrong. You are not engaged to lady Cotman's—you know you are not, and that you declined engaging yourself upon the very plea of your husband's coming."

"But why should he dictate the day of my going home?" said Elizabeth. "Why



could he not consult me a little? I know I must go at his time, but he might have given me some degree of consequence with other people, by seeming to ask my opinion."

"My dear Elizabeth, you take from your own consequence more than he does by this display of temper, and make me very seriously uneasy. If you are aware that you cannot successfully oppose him, why hazard offending to no purpose? I have hitherto endeavoured to believe that the fault was principally his, but I am now painfully convinced that it is at least mutual."

"But am I then to give up every wish of mine without an effort? May I never exert a little spirit to obtain what I desire?"

"Do you find by such exertions you do gain what you desire? Very seldom, I fancy. Spirit! that is the rock upon which so many split. Silly women affect to boast of managing their husbands, but trust me,

Elizabeth, whenever you find that to be really the case, it is by far different methods than a violent exertion of *spirit*; and, depend upon it, where you hear women declare they do manage and obtain their own will by this high-spirited conduct, if you could penetrate into the interior of their families, you would generally find they lived a life of contention, and were forced to yield at last, instead of conquering. I believe, by a little concession at first, you might have preserved the influence you certainly possessed over your husband. Now I know not what to say. It is very rarely that such influence is ever regained when it is once forfeited, for men rarely forgive the faults of their wives, and, I believe, never forget. However they may comply with that admirable precept to 'write injuries in dust, but benefits in marble,' in respect to the world at large, I suspect they are more apt to reverse it when applied to a wife. Perhaps they are thus tenacious in this instance, because, having a greater claim upon so dear a con-

nexion, they are more keenly disappointed at a failure in kindness. Try, however, what gentleness and conciliation will do on your part. You have not been long enough a wife to have lost all your power; and you have one advantage on your side, that your husband has none of his own family or relations to prejudice him against you, by unfair or secret insinuations, a source frequently of great discomfort and disadvantage to a young married woman."

"Ah! all this is very good, very excellent, my dear mother," replied Elizabeth, shrugging her shoulders, and rising; "but I believe an angel could not bear with Arlingham's queer, mean, selfish temper. However, I'll try—if I can. But, Althea, you who have sat by enjoying this lecture so slyly, never marry, if you are wise, nor believe even the fair-seeming sir Montague Vavasour; leave him for the sentimental Phoebe."

"I believe sir Montague and I are in no danger from each other," said Althea;

“but though I have no designs on him myself, I should be sorry to see him the husband of such a nonentity as Miss Pringle. I should like a college for voluntary old maids, and I would place Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Amy Finch at the head of it. None should be admitted who could not bring certificates of being of a cheerful temper and good disposition, contented with their lot, and free from every wish in which the men were concerned. In short, they must all resemble, as nearly as possible, the two lady presidents. I should anxiously await the fortunate era which would admit me amongst them, and I think it would be the happiest community in England.”

“And pray what is the prescribed age in which your votaries are to enter this charming retreat?” said Mrs. Vernon, laughing, “and what are your rules?—May not widows be admitted?”

“I think I shall allow them to take the vows at forty,” replied Althea. “If a woman is satisfied to consider herself an old



maid at that age, without any absurd wishes to change her situation, she is safe, that being as foolish an age in general as any between that and fifteen. Widows are not admissible, and my rules are not quite digested and arranged."

"You are just in time to give your opinion of an institution invented by my sister Althea," said Mrs. Arlingham, as sir Montague Vavasour entered the room.

"It must be a very gay one, if I may judge from the mirth it caused," replied he. "May I be admitted as a member?"

"Why no, I think not exactly," replied Mrs. Vernon, "this being neither more nor less than an asylum for old maids, of which Althea impatiently anticipates the delights."

"God forbid!" exclaimed he, expressively: "The world has too many claims on such women as Miss Vernon, to suffer her to waste her usefulness in 'single blessedness.' She will, I trust, become the happiest, as I believe she will be the best, of wives and mothers. This is not a time



—I am not at liberty—Excuse me, madam. If you knew what I feel, you would pity my agitation.”

Sir Montague hastily left the room, mounted his horse, and rode off as quick as he could, leaving the three ladies in considerable confusion and embarrassment, unable to account for a scene so strange, yet no longer doubting his preference of Althea. Circumstances, which they could not even guess at, seemed to have checked an avowal which yet hovered on his lips; and Althea, in the emotion his conduct had excited, found something like regard beating in her heart towards him. Even Mrs. Arlingham, however, could make nothing of it, except that he was fettered by some engagement of which he repented, and that he would move heaven and earth to render such engagement null and void, and offer his free hand to Miss Vernon as soon as possible.

“But Althea is disposed of, you know,” said Mrs. Vernon: “What will become of the college if she is a seceder?”

Althea did not feel disposed for raillery, and left her mother and sister to their further conjectures and surmises respecting Vavasour's strange manner and mysterious words, whilst she went to the nursery, determined to think of him no more, in which resolution she persevered so effectually, that she thought of nothing else.

## CHAPTER IX.

Think not, he cries, to live like me—

My wealth supports my vanity ;

Your folly should be moderate,

Proportion'd to a small estate.

FRANCIS'S *Horace*.

“UPON my word, Mr. Philipson,” said Mr. Arlingham, as they walked round the pretty ornamented fields, and observed the tasteful decorations which Edward had lavishly bestowed, “upon my word, you have made quite a superb place here. I'm afraid you are doing more than a future-

vicar of Feltham may be inclined, or indeed able, to keep up. I assure you now, upon my honour, I have nothing at Westhaven half so elegant as this little temple, with this light and beautiful trellis veranda running round it, and this pretty little aviary, with its gilded enclosure, and variety of warbling tenants. *I find these sort of indulgences too expensive.*"

"I understand you, Arlingham," replied Philipson, piqued almost beyond prudent endurance. "I own these whims have been expensive, but once done, you know, and they require but little to keep them up. What is a little birdseed? Besides, there is such a comfort in having these little elegancies in our own premises; and they have frequently kept me at home, when perhaps I might have been in some gay party."

"The alternative, however, is not desirable—expence, either at home or abroad," said Arlingham, coldly. "What pretty little Gothic range of buildings is that?" he continued, gravely.

“That?” said Philipson, colouring, and confused; “oh, that is only some dog-kennels and a pig-sty. You know, as the place altogether is too small to admit of these sort of things being at a proper distance from the house, I was obliged to make them as little of a nuisance as I could. They cost very little more than those of a more common sort would have done.”

“Nay, I’m sure I have no business, nor indeed inclination, to make impertinent observations,” said Arlingham, turning his eyes round in all directions—“Every man has a right to spend his money as he pleases; I am only afraid the future incumbent may think *I* have wished for all this waste of ornament.”

“Why really one great reason for my laying out so much on this place, which, after all, I certainly ought only to consider as a temporary residence, is, that I think in so doing I am only paying that for repairs and comforts I myself enjoy, which my widow would have to pay hereafter

for dilapidations. I cannot imagine where my successor will find room for a claim of that sort. As to this temple, and the gilded aviary and birds, and those sort of things, I can easily remove them, you know, whenever the old rector of Fairfield gives me an opportunity."

"True, I had forgot that convenience," replied Arlingham, dryly.

Philipson was struck at the moment with something odd in the expression of his voice and eye; but Arlingham began talking of his own farm, and relapsed into his usual manner so immediately, that the other forgot what he had thought odd, and, though not pleased with his observations, suspected nothing. Neither gentleman, however, was satisfied with the other, and were far from feeling any additional liking.

Mrs. Vernon's morning lecture had certainly a temporary effect on Elizabeth at least, since she was so condescending and well-behaved to Arlingham as to excite his evident astonishment. But he had ob-



served those sort of changes before, when she wanted to carry a point, and was therefore gravely on the watch to *refuse* any request she might make, from the mere suspicion of an intention on her part to outwit him; and the day concluded, much to his surprise, without any favour being asked, and, moreover, with Elizabeth's free consent to *give up her engagement*, and go home on Friday.

Thursday morning rose in the same harmony on this querulous pair, and they were all enjoying a gay breakfast in the pretty temple, close by the gilded aviary, when Mrs. Pringle's carriage drove furiously past, and stopped at the lawn gate. Philipson felt at first angry at the intrusion, and then alarmed, though he knew not why, at the importance and heightened roses of the bustling lady's cheeks, as, waddling up the lawn, she advanced to meet him.

"Oh, Mr. Philipson!" she began, "such a disaster! such a misfortin! Lord bless me! I'm in such a heat! Sir Montago

Wawasour, whether he is killed outright, or whether he is only stunted, I don't know, but wery much he is wounded, that's certain. I'm so confounded and so hurried, for I left Phoebe in such hysterics!"

All this time Philipson had been trying to get in a few words, and begging a more satisfactory explanation than her agitation would allow her to give. In the meantime, all the party had flocked round Mrs. Pringle, Arlingham excepted, who having by dint of management secured to himself the best slice of ham, deliberately waited to envelop it between two pieces of bread and butter, thus effectually making it his own, in case of other persons returning before him to the table. He would not, however, have been thus anxious about his breakfast, if he had entertained the least idea of Mrs. Pringle's serious business; but he only supposed it some nonsense relating to her silly daughter, whom he disliked extremely, and therefore did not hurry himself. When he did go forward, he was shocked at the view of so many

pallid faces, and the request of Mrs. Pringle, that Mrs. Vernon, and "all as could," would return with her.

"Oh! Mr. Arlingham," said she, "who would have thought this? Poor dear sir Montago Wawasour is, I'm almost afeard, dead. I was a going this morning across the park to look up my Guinea-fowls' eggs amongst the nettles, when what should I see but the baronight in his curricule. Vell, he just stopped to speak, seeing as I and Miss Pringle valked towards him as quick as ve could, when just then a vheelbarrow was drove past, and his horses turned the carriage smack round without the least notice, and dashed it right over. Vell, I screamed, and Miss Pringle screamed, and vent into hysterics, and such a *conquest* of people came round us! The horses was soon stopped, but the mischief was done, and poor sir Montago was took to the Hall in a swoond, and so was Miss Pringle. His right arm was broke, that I see; but what other detriment he have received I don't yet know. I sent off for Mr. Rick-

ets, and then came myself to consult you as to whether he ought to be moved or not. I'm sure he's welcome to the use of Lark-Hall, and I shall be proud to nurse him, and you know I have a notion that way; and he'll be wery near Mr. Babington, in case Mr. Rickets is engaged any time, and he has a pretty smattering, you know."

Some comfort yet remained to sir Montague's friends, from the well-known exaggeration which usually accompanied her recitals. Mrs. Vernon and Mrs. Arlingham were soon ready to return with Mrs. Pringle; and in the real feeling of the moment, Arlingham forgot his slice of ham, and ordering his carriage, got into it with Philipson, and followed the ladies. The first sound that struck the ears of Mrs. Vernon was the continued hysterical scream, no longer affected, of Miss Pringle, to whom Mr. Babington was administering drops, and bathing her temples. Mrs. Vernon found she was in good hands, and therefore walked forward, by Mrs. Pringle's desire, to the drawing-room,



where they all impatiently awaited Mr. Rickets's arrival. They heard that sir Montague was revived, and much relieved from his painful situation, by the skill and attention of Mr. Babington, who had released the fractured arm from incumbrance, and placed it in a safe and easy posture, and had ventured to bleed the left, as the baronet complained extremely of a giddiness and intense pain in his head. This had relieved him considerably ; and so judiciously had his amateur surgeon performed his part, that nothing remained for Mr. Rickets but to set the limb. To remove him at present was impossible ; and so, after many apologies and regrets for the trouble he must unwillingly give, he resigned himself to a good bed, a bustling but attentive nurse, in his hostess, and opiates, which her shrill voice incessantly threatened to counteract. When his friends first entered his apartment, which Mr. Rickets only allowed them to do for a moment,



he cast his eyes round eagerly for Althea. An instant's reflection shewed him the folly of such a thought, and he sighed as he resigned it. Arlingham took possession of his bedside, as head nurse, at Mrs. Pringle's request, and his return to Westhaven was deferred till sir Montague was able to be removed to Mrs. Vernon's, which Mr. Rickets pronounced might be in a few days, since he found *he* should not lose his patient by the means. Phoebe, who was now recovered from the violence of her struggles, though still languid from their effect, begged most piteously that Mrs. Vernon would allow Althea to go to her for a few days, a request which Mrs. Pringle seconded, by something between a permission and an order, and which Mrs. Vernon coldly refused, to the utter surprise of mother and daughter, who were too ignorant to see any impropriety in such a wish.

“Vell,” said Mrs. Pringle, “you must do as you like; certainly; but I thought it

would have been pleasant for Miss Vernon to stay with Miss Pringle a bit, and I don't see any harm if she did."

"If you did, I'm sure you would not ask it," replied Mrs. Vernon, politely. "Mrs. Philipson cannot spare her, particularly as Mrs. Arlingham is with us. We must now wish you a good morning, with many thanks. Should Miss Pringle wish to change the scene, I am sure my daughters will be very happy to see her at Feltham."

"Oh, not for worlds!" replied Phœbe, vehemently.

"Oh dear, no!" said her mother, "to be sure, not whilst we have visitors, and sick visitors too."

Mrs. Vernon made no remarks; and Philipson joining them, they went to the Lea to leave a message for George, who had gone some miles into the country, at the same time that Vavasour set off on his unfortunate journey.

CHAPTER X.  
~~~~~

Never consider as a trifle what may tend to please him.

The great articles of duty he will set down as his own;

but the lesser attentions he will mark as favours.

Julia de Roubigne.

It must be obvious to every one who understands the *silent* eloquence of love, that sir Montague Vavasour's heart had received more than a common impression in favour of Althea Vernon, and it is equally clear that only very imperious necessity prevented his giving words to that which his eyes had declared. Of Althea's sentiments towards him, no one, even of her own family, could form a decided opinion, except that as a man of extraordinary good sense, fine accomplishments, and most polished manners, he was distinguished as superior to every other she had ever known. It was impossible she could avoid seeing

that he entertained a very high opinion of her, though no word had ever escaped him (except those which seemed involuntarily excited by her plan of being an old maid for life) which could be construed into an avowal of preference. There are, however, looks and manners of peculiar softness and eloquence, which convey as much as language, and women, even without vanity, may be allowed to read their meaning, and draw their inferences. Althea was certain she was highly thought of by sir Montague, before those mysterious words confirmed the idea; but assured, from that agitation of speech and manner, that some circumstances existed of sufficient force to compel him to check the growing passion, she suffered not the preference she was aware of feeling in her own heart to increase its power, nor become apparent to any one. It was indeed so entirely in its infancy at present, that the task was not difficult for reason and common sense to subdue so indistinct and almost unacknowledged a sentiment.

Sir Montague's feelings on this subject had been of longer duration, and a more vivid nature, for he had early distinguished her superiority at Farnham. The same circumstances of entanglement in his own situation, however, existed there, and these were then aided and strengthened by a belief in her regard for Pelham Wrottesley, of which he and almost every other person there entertained no doubt. Conscious then of his own embarrassments, and looking upon her as gradually becoming attached to another, sir Montague had shewn her far less attention than any other female present, in fact, because he admired her more, and feared to love too well that which was thus rendered doubly unattainable.

It is not wonderful that under these circumstances Althea had not much noticed him, for his face possessed no extraordinary beauty beyond that of expression, and that depending so much on the feeling of the moment, that he was seldom much remarked. His eyes were exquisitely handsome, but

it was when conversation or deep interest inspired his heart ; their colour and form were fine, but it was their speaking expression which fascinated, and that was excited only by sentiment. His figure was commanding and fine, and his manners grave, dignified, and calculated at once to attach and encourage merit, and awe presumption. His fortune was noble, as was the use he made of it, and his family of the most ancient and unspotted respectability.

Such was sir Montague Vavasour ; and thus gifted, it was natural he should be a universal favourite with the ladies ; and many were the wonderments amongst the mothers who had daughters to dispose of, that he should have reached the age of eight-and-twenty unmarried. A rumour had indeed been heard abroad at one time of some early engagement between him and a cousin, but as she was known to be as rich, though not so handsome as himself, and very amiable, there seemed no reason why, if they were engaged, they

should not have married before this time ; and they therefore supposed the story without foundation, and looked upon him as a man to be disposed of. How far these conjectures were founded in truth, time will disclose.

The day after the accident had befallen the baronet, Mrs. Arlingham received a note from her husband, to say that his patient was going on extremely well ; and that as Mr. Babington would pass the day at the Hall, he had no objection to keep *the engagement* she had made with lady Cotman for that day, if she had not already sent to put it off. Sir Montague, he added, had no fever, and was so extremely pleased with Mr. Babington, who, to much medical knowledge, added the manners, sentiments, and information of a gentleman, that he felt no compunction at leaving him for a few hours, and that this day would be particularly convenient to her brother. Elizabeth, as may be readily imagined, felt tolerably annoyed at this

note, the engagement having never existed but in her own assertion. She carried the note to her mother.

“See now,” said Mrs. Vernon, “what a difficulty you are in! How much——”

“Oh, for Heaven’s sake! spare me text and sermon,” said Elizabeth, peevishly. “I can so readily anticipate all the ti-tum-ti which grave and wise mammas have ready cut and dried for such occasions. Only do tell me what I am to say to this eternal plague of mine—taking every thing for gospel.”

“Nay, my dear,” replied Mrs. Vernon, not very well pleased, “you must say and do what you please, or rather what you can. Say her ladyship does not expect you to-day.”

“Well, that certainly is true enough, and perhaps he may be satisfied without inquiring farther. But then I dare say George will think it necessary to say something impertinent, as boys always do, if they speak at all, at his age—perhaps go to Adderley, and make a confusion there,

and then we shall have her ladyship, with her broad, puffy, white face, coming to hear all about it. This comes of telling an innocent fib now."

Mrs. Vernon looked significantly, but said nothing.

"Pray, my dear mother, forget and forgive my rudeness just now," said Elizabeth. "How you could moralize now upon the heinousness of all fibs, black and white! To the inconvenience attending them I subscribe heartily, and I really think—Lord! how impatient these male fools are! Here comes my spouse and my brother. Help me out for goodness sake!"

The explanation was awkward enough, and Arlingham was in a violent passion, and immediately settled to return home the next day. Elizabeth had scarcely ever seen him so angry, and was very seriously sorry for the fit of ill-humour and determined opposition which had led her into so uncomfortable a situation. He returned immediately to Lark-Hall to take leave of sir Montague, to whom, however, he

made some excuse foreign to the real one, unwilling to expose his wife, though greatly offended. George Vernon, too, affected great indignation; but for that his sister cared nothing, and saw him ride off in a violent rage with perfect composure. She was too much annoyed by all that had happened to find any inclination for formal calls, and left all her apologies for such an omission to her mother and sisters, perfectly indifferent whether the people were offended or not. Arlingham returned late in the evening from Mrs. Pringle's, and refusing any supper, took leave of the ladies, determined, as he said, to be off very early in the morning. Elizabeth, thus included in an arrangement very disagreeable, and in which her pleasure had not been at all consulted, was much inclined to relapse into reproaches; but she saw him so seriously and gloomily angry, that she dared not; and bidding them a melancholy farewell, was compelled to be obedient and silent.

“Thank God! Arlingham is not my husband,” said Isabella: “I could not live with such a temper as his.”

“And do you think he is entirely without excuse?” her husband answered—“Does he receive no provocation? I’m sure I could not live with Elizabeth. I should soon tire of a gloomy wife, however attentive she might be to every other duty; but a taunting one I must fly from.”

Isabella understood him, and resolved not to give way to low spirits, or a disposition to repine.

Mrs. Vernon and Althea occupied the same apartment at the vicarage, and when they retired to it, Mrs. Vernon gave way to the tears she had with great difficulty repressed so long. Althea wept too,

“How much unhappiness do I foresee for my poor mistaken Elizabeth!” said she. “She might have been so differently situated, for she had every thing which fortune and consequence could give her. Her husband had foibles, and was not of a superior understanding; but what man could

bear that his *wife* should be the person to animadvert on and expose him? And to-morrow, I dare say, they will go quarrelling all the way home, and enter the house, which ought to be the scene of their greatest happiness, with every feeling but good ones towards each other. How differently did I think of Elizabeth's temper under my roof!"

"I think," replied Althea, "she has this time gone so much farther than she intended, or at least the consequences are so much more serious and prolonged, that she will be frightened into good behaviour, and more anxious to make her peace with Arlingham than to exasperate him farther."

"A very precarious dependence that," said Mrs. Vernon. "Isabella, I hope, will act very differently, though I am not wholly without my fears for her. If, however, she errs, it will not be from ill-temper, or a want of attention to her duties; but Philipson has been so exclusively ac-

customed to her attentions himself, that he cannot bear she should divide them, even with his child; and such are her notions of a parent's duty, that she will hardly be prevailed on to quit the baby for him, and then he will fly off, and they will begin to dispute. Oh! how many cares have the happiest marriages!"

"The time I am here," replied Althea, "Isabella will be able to give up her time as much to her child as she ought to wish; and it is this that makes me so desirous of staying here till my little namesake is old enough to be more safely entrusted to her nurse-maid. Isabella may then return to her old habits of walking, and riding, and gardening, with Philipson, and I shall not be missed, and then I shall return and settle at home, where, by that time, Harriet will be settled too, I hope."

"You shall go to Torrington Lodge then," said Mrs. Vernon, "where Mrs. Charlton is very anxious to see you. Did you know that Torrington is very near sir

Montague Vavasour's family seat, Charleville?"

"No, indeed—that is, I did not know to whom Charleville belonged. I am sorry for that, I think, for people will say I go to be near him, as I find they choose to fancy he is a lover of mine."

"I wish they said true," returned Mrs. Vernon, "for his sake and yours too. I am persuaded he is attached to you, whatever it may be that prevents his owning it; and I think, whoever may be the lady to whom other reports say he is engaged, she would not make him a better wife than my Althea."

"Your good opinion is very dear to me," said Althea, "and with you I am much more securely happy than I believe I could be in marriage. I assure you, when I talk of old maids, I may appear to be laughing, but I am very serious; and after all the happy women I have seen in that state, and the wretchedness I have witnessed in the other, I have no hesi-

tation in making my choice in their favour."

"Pretty talking in a girl of twenty! I will yet hope to see you a happy wife, or, in sir Montague's own words, 'one of the happiest of wives and mothers,' as I am persuaded you will be one of the best. You, who have been exemplary as a daughter, a sister, and a friend, cannot be otherwise in the still more important duties which annex to the conjugal and maternal ties."

The next morning Mrs. Vernon and Althea were down stairs long before the travellers were ready to go; and Arlingham was not sorry to get a good breakfast free of expence. He and Elizabeth seemed more comfortable than on the preceding evening; and this gave their anxious friends great pleasure, and enabled them all to part with more cheerfulness. Mr. Arlingham gave Mrs. Vernon a civil invitation to Westhaven; and turning to Althea, with more warmth than was usual

with him, pressed her very earnestly to go to them very soon, adding, he was sorry Elizabeth had not secured her as a third in their carriage now—"You can do more with this odd-tempered girl than any body," said he, with a sort of grave smile, and tapping Elizabeth's cheek; "and I promise you, I often want assistance to manage her properly. So do come very soon."

"I shall *manage him* at last," said Elizabeth, in a triumphant whisper, "and dearly shall he pay for his tricks."

Althea shook her head gravely; Elizabeth laughed; and the carriage drove off.

CHAPTER XI.

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd :
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase.

SHAKESPEARE.

SEVERAL days passed on quietly enough. Elizabeth's letter mentioned their safe arrival at Westhaven, after a less unpleasant *tête-à-tête* journey than she had ventured to expect. Mr. Arlingham was immediately immersed in rural business, and she was driving about when she could command her horses. "I must not omit telling you one piece of news, however," she continued—"The time I was away, and frequently railing at my husband, he was busying himself in ordering me the prettiest little cabriole you ever beheld, and breaking in for my sole use a beautiful pony, just bigger than a donkey. I

own my conscience does give me a *twinge* or two; but why could not the man say so at Feltham? It would have spared many a frown on my brow. Really he has some tolerably agreeable notions; and, after all, I am inclined to think mine is the best way of managing him. You would give way, and spoil him quite."

This letter was very consolatory, though the conclusion was not exactly as it ought to have been. In the meantime, sir Montague Vavasour was gradually recovering, and was now well enough to bid farewell to his hospitable entertainers at Lark-Hall. He mentioned his intention of going in the course of a day or two to the Lea, having promised Mrs. Vernon to stay there a short time, as soon as he could remove. This was the signal for sighs and tears, and every symptom of melancholy, in Miss Phœbe. It was impossible for Vavasour, though the least of a coxcomb of any man breathing, to shut his eyes to her preference of him; and all he could do

was to behave with cold and uniform politeness, studiously excluding every appearance of the most common gallantry. Had he not been differently engaged, and had he never seen Althea, Miss Pringle, with all her money, would never have won a heart like his. Determined, however, to lose nothing for want of making her own wishes fully understood, she took all possible opportunities of making downright love to him; and it was pretty certain that sir Montague's honour was the greatest safeguard of her own. In spite of her evident partiality, and several broad hints from Mrs. Pringle, the hard-hearted baronet fixed the final moment of his continuance at the Hall; and the day arrived, in Phœbe's estimation, cruelly fast.

"You will leave us then," said she, as she joined him on the lawn, whither she had watched him sauntering to look for his curriole and servant—"You will go—go too in that detested vehicle, which has already so nearly deprived the world of its greatest ornament."

“ You are very good to think thus of my safety,” he replied, blushing both for her and himself—“ I have no fears of my horses, notwithstanding the trick they played me. Allow me now to thank you, Miss Pringle, for the many attentions you have so kindly shewn so troublesome a guest, and to hope I may be allowed at some future time——”

“ Oh! what—what would you ask that I can refuse?” said she, in the greatest agitation—“ Oh, cruel and insensible man! do you at length feel for me? But what would you request? Ask any thing—every thing—my life—my fortune.”

“ You are too good, madam, much too good,” replied the baronet, extremely disgusted, and anxious to fly from such nonsensical rhapsody—“ I merely intended to say, that if at any future time we should meet in any public place, you would allow me to avail myself of the honour of your friendship, and renew our present acquaintance.”

“ Is that all?” said Phoebe, pouting.

"Alas! I shall not live to a renewal of acquaintance. I shall merely drag on a hated existence in these dreary shades, and shortly end a life which your cruelty must render miserable. Then, when I am a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, each animated feature mouldering in the dust, you may vainly wish you had shewn some compassion to my woes, and pity the poor girl who dies for you."

As she concluded this pathetic appeal, which occasioned in Vavasour no small inclination to laugh, so perfectly was he assured of its being merely copied from some absurd German novel, and without any reference to the real state of her heart, than she reclined her broad, white, unmeaning forehead against a tree, and declared she *would* faint. Tired of the farce, and impatient of her folly, he had a great mind to leave her to the promised fit, well convinced that in such a case she would instantly recover; gravely, however, and without the least appearance of interest, he offered to go and send some one to her

assistance, or he would support her home; but softness yielding to anger and disappointment, she burst into a passion of tears, just as her mother came up to them, and loudly called to know what was the matter, and what she cried for?

“ Oh! he scorns me, insults me, refuses my love,” said Phoebe, crying louder than ever; “ and I know it is all for that Althea Vernon. I told her all the secrets of my fond heart, and she has betrayed me, and taken advantage of all I *confided* to her, and stolen away his love from me.”

“ She’s a base wixen then,” replied Mrs. Pringle; “ and I’ll be even with her, that I vill. Come, cheer up, my dearest, and don’t lament thus for no man. Surely, Miss Phoebe Pringle, with fifty thousand pounds, need not beg for a husband. If von von’t, another vill; and a lord’s above a baronight. A poor return, though, you make us for all ve have done, sir, I’m free to confess. Howsomever, don’t think ve court your alliance—far from it. As to Miss Wernon, you are quite welcome to

pay what dewotion you like there. She has no fortin, you know, I suppose, and I think she have used Miss Pringle ungentlely, and so she shall know afore she's much older."

"Allow me one word, madam," said sir Montague, with a dignity of manner which awed even Mrs. Pringle, and still more deeply wounded the heart of her silly daughter: "Miss Pringle must exonerate me from any attempt, at any time, to gain her affections; she will also do me the justice to say I have always treated her with a politeness very far removed from scorn or insult. I cannot command my heart sufficiently to love her, in the common acceptation of the word; but I would willingly respect both her and you, to whom I have so many and great obligations, which I shall ever gratefully remember and acknowledge. As to the insinuations you have thrown out respecting Miss Vernon, I only condescend to notice them for *her* sake—she is above any sarcasms which can be levelled at her. I

admire and esteem Miss Vernon as a model of delicacy, propriety, good sense, and good temper—but my hand has long been engaged to another.”

A silence of a few minutes followed, in which time the curriele drove up; and sir Montague having previously paid his thanks and compliments to Mr. Pringle, now repeated them again to the ladies; and every thing being ready, he mounted his carriage, and was driven rapidly away, leaving the mother and daughter, who puzzled him to decide which was the greatest fool, with only one source of comfort, namely, that if Phœbe was not the chosen lady, neither was Althea.

Sir Montague was soon settled in the best apartments in Mrs. Vernon's house; and very assiduously George attended him. Althea, of course, was absent, and very seldom the subject of conversation, though it was very evident to Mrs. Vernon he thought of little else. Frequently he seemed on the point of speaking to her, with an earnestness too great for a mere

common topic of conversation, and as constantly he checked himself, and talked with unusual volubility upon some subject, in which it was easy to see he had no interest. Delicacy, of course, withheld Althea's family from speaking of her in the high terms in which they all thought of her; but Vavasour easily discovered that she was the idol of them all, and that even, her elder sisters bowed to her opinion as superior to their own. George was not much in the habit of praise, and a sense of propriety restrained his tongue in speaking of Althea; but yet he evidently preferred her to any of his sisters, and respected her advice. Sir Montague sighed, as he thought of all that might eventually prevent his ever endeavouring to make such a treasure his own; and the more he considered, the more intricate appeared his fate. He dined once or twice at Philipson's, more for the pleasure of being in her society than because he liked him; for Philipson was not a man he much admired, and Isabella he thought insipid;

yet, whilst he sought the dangerous indulgence, he blamed himself for his folly, and made resolutions, which the next temptation broke. To avoid the repetition of such failures in forbearance, he determined to depart, and his arm being now nearly well, he ordered his man to pack up; and to avoid entreaties which he knew not how to resist, he said nothing of his intention to his friends till the hour before his departure, and then took leave in a hurried manner, which, to those who could read his heart, carried his excuse with it. Althea, though she had been less in his company than any other of her family, felt his loss much more sensibly than they did, and much more than she chose should be suspected. She had always found a timely exertion of reason sufficient in every exigency, and it did not desert her now; and so well did she conceal her feelings, that Isabella, with a look of wonder, and something of disapprobation, declared she was so insensible, it was perfectly unnatural, and what she hated

to see in so young a girl. Althea smiled, and allowed Isabella to think what she pleased.

Every thing now, as Philipson said, returned to its old stupid way. He loved society so much, that though he was prudent enough not to seek it, and had indeed declined all dinner-visits in the neighbourhood, he was delighted when he could make out a necessity for going out, or giving a dinner; and very much he missed Mrs. Arlingham, whose stay at his house had introduced a gayer system than usual, and which, when it ceased with her presence, left him duller than ever. Isabella, though she now gave up more of her time to him than *she* approved, had certainly lost something of her influence, by having ever appeared to neglect him; and this being the first time the vicarage had ever been so gay, it seemed additionally dull, after that gaiety had given place to old habits, which he found it difficult to fall into easily. Althea saw she must not think of leaving them at present; for

Bella, disheartened at perceiving that she gave up her own wishes in vain, was frequently on the point of falling again into the error which had already cost her so much, and which, but for Althea, she would have done. Besides all this, every place now was beautified. The shrubberies were planted and thriving—the aviary was complete—and the veranda finished, and overhung with beautiful creepers. Isabella no longer found time to garden by his side; and, what was still a greater drawback to his spirits than all, he found bills coming in for all these elegant improvements much faster than he could pay them, and much heavier than he expected; and the rector of Fairfield was still as likely to live as ever. Of Arlingham's manner, in speaking of Fairfield, he could not think without a cold chill, and forcibly banished the recollection from his mind whenever it recurred, which nevertheless it would sometimes do, in spite of all his endeavours.

CHAPTER XII.

Ah! hapless wretch! condemn'd to dwell
 For ever in my native shell;
 Ordain'd to move when others please,
 Not for my own content or ease. COWPER.

TIME passed on thus till the winter again came round, and Philipson then contrived to dissipate the "lagging hours" more to his liking, by growing immoderately fond of hunting. Shooting he had always loved, and the season before he had pursued it pleasantly, rationally, and profitably, by making it a source of occasional supply to his household. He had never allowed it to break in upon his social evenings, which, but for him, Isabella would have spent alone; but returning home to a comfortable dinner, at a reasonable hour, had passed the rest of the time in reading or conversing with her. He knew not,

during the first year (nearly) of his marriage, what contradiction was ; and though his wife was now all that was excellent and attentive, he was not of a temper to forget that she *had* preferred sitting by her sleeping infant to walking with him, and no longer made her his first object of interest. His home was moreover now embittered by the thoughts of debts which he had no immediate means of discharging ; and he began to look forward, with no very pleasant anticipation, to a large family and a small income. He was not at all disposed to give himself up to these reflections, more than he could help, and therefore entered with avidity into the turbulent delights of hunting. His pony was exchanged for a handsome horse ; and the little boy, who used to give the pony an occasional dressing, sharp knives, and weed the garden, was superseded by a young man in the village, who was well paid, but whom, as he did not live in the house, Philipson did not consider as a servant. He knew he was wrong in all this, and he

saw that Isabella was unhappy at it, though she said nothing. But he grew so thoughtful and so morose at home, that she endeavoured to find out it was better he should be amused abroad ; and as he never entered into hunting-dinners, either out or at home, she became less uneasy, though by no means reconciled to his new occupation ; whilst she tried, by every means in her power, to lessen domestic expences, by way of making the balance even, and denied herself every thing in the shape of indulgence.

As long as Althea remained near her, she had one certain source of comfort ; and it was this consideration which yet detained that excellent girl from other friends, all anxious to see her. But Althea's health began to fail with her spirits ; and Mrs. Vernon at length insisted upon her going for a few weeks to Westhaven, where they had long been most anxious to see her, promising herself to be as much with Isabella as possible. Harriet Vernon had now left the friends she had

long been staying with, and was settled with her mother. George was studying law in the Temple, with the idea of being a counsellor, and as he was nearly of age, and would then be independent, and able, if he pleased, to assist Philipson, the sisters endeavoured to cheer their spirits with the hope that he would not withhold what he would then be well able to spare. George had been too well tutored by Arlingham to like the less worldly Philipson, and of that Althea was more aware than Isabella; but still she hoped that affection for his sister would overcome his dislike of Philipson's imprudence, and induce him to lend, at least, if he would not give, the necessary means of freeing him from his most pressing embarrassments. Althea was his favourite; and as she knew he was to pass his Christmas at Westhaven, she agreed to meet him there, and seek for some favourable opportunity of softening him in favour of his brother-in-law. Isabella hardly knew how to part with Althea; and felt the company of Har-

riety a poor compensation. This young lady has hitherto made no figure in the annals of her family, and was indeed very little known to themselves. At school she formed an intimacy with a young lady of large fortune and consequence, which ripened into a mutual friendship, much more sincere than such attachments usually do.

Miss Lascelles had very indifferent health, and being the only child, was indulged in every wish. Fortunately, her good sense was equal to her power; and her parents were justified in their extreme partiality for her. With her, Harriet had passed several years, and had become almost a stranger to her own connexions. The death of Miss Lascelles restored her to them, though Mr. and Mrs. Lascelles still wished her to continue their guest. Anxious, however, to renew her early affections, she preferred returning home, promising to visit these excellent friends occasionally; and she had been a few weeks only at the Lea, when Althea pre-

pared for a visit to Westhaven. It rarely happens that a situation like that Harriet had been so long accustomed to proves a blessing in the end; nor did it to her. She was estranged, in a great measure, from her own family; habituated to luxuries she found almost necessary to her comfort, and therefore relinquished with regret; and removed from company and gaieties, which she did not dislike, in a large town, to retirement in a village she could not bear. Miss Lascelles had left her five hundred pounds, and a well-stocked wardrobe, and these were the greatest advantages she derived from her intimacy and friendship. Harriet was quite the woman of fashion, and had acquired, with her friend, several accomplishments more shewy than useful. She was cold and reserved in her manners, and soon found how difficult a task it would be to assimilate with her sisters. Thus different from them all, she was a very poor substitute, in Isabella's family, for the active, useful,

cheerful Althea; and very unwillingly the latter left her post. Harriet seemed much better qualified for Westhaven Park than for Feltham Vicarage; and Mrs. Philipson found her at times rather a burthen than an assistant; nor did Philipson admire her, for she was no walker, had always been accustomed to a fire in her room, a servant to wait upon her, and walked from room to room in a great India shawl. With all this, however, her heart was not bad, and her disposition liberal; and many little comforts were procured by her means for Isabella, and many little articles of apparel for the baby, whom, however, she did not notice much, not being fond of children. Althea had disclosed to her some particulars of Philipson's situation, and the embarrassments which so materially destroyed his domestic comforts; and Harriet, though she listened coldly enough, assured Althea, that if he became very seriously distressed, and her brother would not relieve him, she would.

“At the same time,” said she, “I think, on every account, it will be right to make the trial of George’s generosity, for he is rich, and can assist him without feeling it, whilst my poor pittance will, I perceive, be very necessary to procure me a thousand indulgences essential to my comfort. I find I *must* wait on myself, so I have nothing to do but submit; but I cannot live through the winter without a fire in my bed-room. I must have a glass of port every day, for Mrs. Philipson’s slops I cannot drink. I never wear a coloured gown, nor a white one two days, consequently my washing is expensive. I must have the finest soap for my hands—silk stockings at all times—kid shoes; and, in short, my dear Althea, I have so long been accustomed to every thing superlative, that I cannot live without them. I lament this extremely, and wish now I had never left my home, but had shared with you, all my life, that mediocrity to which I am now condemned, and which

seems to sit easy enough upon you. My little income will enable me to procure for myself these little elegancies, and if it fails, I must, I suppose, try to conform to my fate. If I cannot add to Isabella's income, I will never cost her an extra penny. I'm grieved beyond measure to see her again in the family way; and think of the age of that infant, Althea!"

"It is a sad thing," replied Althea, "and I am the more anxious to pay my little visits now, as my mother seems to think I require change of air and scene, that I may be able to devote myself to her at the time she most wants me. I have therefore fixed with Elizabeth to go next week and pass a short time with her. When I return, you will most likely take my place there—a place much better calculated for you than this."

"I feel that it is," said Harriet, "and I regret that I do feel it, but I cannot help it now. Mrs. Lascelles would willingly have kept me at Cleveland, but I think it my duty to come now to my family. I

acknowledge, however, to you, that I reckon inexpressibly on the three months I have promised to spend there every year, and will take care to select them next time in the winter. You intend, I suppose, to visit Torrington Lodge before you return?"

Althea blushed as she thought of its proximity to Charleville, and her confusion was not unobserved by Harriet. She merely replied she was not quite certain about that; and Harriet, feeling that she had no right to expect her confidence, asked no questions, and the matter dropped.

The spirits of all the sisters drooped as the time approached for their separation, for they all more and more discovered how unfit Harriet was to supply Althea's place, and none more than Harriet herself. That Isabella did not visit much was a great relief to her, for, except to lady Cotman's or Mrs. Pringle's, she would hardly have condescended to attend her. She looked down with great *hauteur* on all the little people, who, offended by her assumption of consequence, which they thought did

not become her, looked down in return on her; and laughed by themselves, and made remarks which would have greatly annoyed her could she have heard them. It was not that Harriet thought the Pringles of any real consequence, since his fortune, large as it was, was acquired in a very vulgar trade; but they lived in some sort of style—kept a carriage and servants—and she found herself better waited on, and sat down to a better table, than at home or at Isabella's. She was a good deal at Lark-Hall, for Mrs. Pringle found she was very fashionable, had very good, though high, manners, and knew a great many fine folks and fine anecdotes.

Miss Pringle, since the fatal termination of her passion for sir Montague Vavasour, had entirely ceased all intimacy with Althea, *whom* she always suspected of having prejudiced him against her, though it was evident she had no designs on him herself. Besides, she had just sense enough to see that Althea held her in great contempt, and inwardly laughed at her, and this she

could not forgive. Harriet in reality did the same; but *she* found so many comforts in the establishment of Lark-Hall, that she was satisfied to bear with the folly of the daughter, the vulgarity of the mother, and the stupidity and ignorance of the father, to share pretty frequently in luxuries which she could not command at home. She would have preferred the same intimacy at Adderley Manor, but the Cotmans were, with the exception of sir Thomas, prouder and colder than herself, and looked upon her as very little superior to the *companion* of the late Miss Lascelles, whilst they ridiculed her haughty manners, which they called second-hand airs, copied from her late mistress. But they said this in a very snug way, for they had no sort of wish to displease George, who would, they thought, be a very proper match for one of the many ready daughters.

CHAPTER XIII.

Graceful and useful all she does,
 Blessing and blest where'er she goes,
 Pure bosom'd as the wat'ry glass,
 And heaven reflected in her face. COWPER.

THE day which rose on Althea's departure seemed as dismal as herself. Rain and snow, heavy clouds, and a cutting wind, hailed her on her rising, and increased the despondency which already filled her mind. She felt one of those unaccountable forebodings which sometimes weigh on the spirits, in spite of every effort of reason to subdue it; and could she have assigned any motive for sending back Arlingham's carriage, which was to meet her half way on her road, most gladly would she have done it. She endeavoured in vain to conquer her depression; and Philipson at last hurried her forcibly to the chaise, in which

he intended to accompany her the first stage.

Harriet was a little piqued at Isabella's violent sorrow, for which she could not account, and did not herself feel, and Bella therefore exerted herself to overcome at least the appearance of it. Very heavily, however, passed the day with all, and in a thousand instances were the tender assiduities of Althea, and her usually gay spirits, missed. In the meantime, Philipson and his companion were rapidly pursuing their way, not much more exhilarated than those they had left, for with all his rattle and apparent want of observation, he was much attached to Althea, and perfectly conscious of the loss they must all sustain in her company.

"I am very selfish, Althea," said he, "to lament as I do your leaving Feltham, for I'm sure it has been so dull of late, that I only wonder how you have been able to bear it. I know I feel vastly inclined to fly sometimes, for somehow Bella is not

half so merry as she used to be. I wish we had never had any brats, for this little girl seems to have done any thing but make us happier."

"I am indeed grieved to hear you say this," replied Althea, "particularly as such was not always your opinion. Once your child seemed so dear to you! If my sister has penetrated into this change, I no longer wonder at her being less gay, particularly in her present situation, to which such sentiments on your part must add many a pang."

"Oh, I do not mean to say that I do not love the child; but, upon my soul! Althea, when I think of all my entanglements, and how likely old Collins is to live these twenty years, I tremble at the difficulties which threaten me. To you I will own what I dare not hint to Bella. I was greatly in debt when I married—college debts: but I dared not then acknowledge such a thing, certain if I did that some prudent friends would step forward and prevent our marriage: And then I expected

this old rector would have popped off long before this. Besides, Arlingham, the rich and prudent, had given me a hint or two respecting my year of grace at college, which I was too much in love to take advantage of, and I dreaded his interference. Altogether I behaved like an enamoured booby, and now begin to repent of my tender folly; not that I regret having married *Isabella*, whom I declare to God I tenderly love, but having married in such a hasty unthinking manner as to involve her in troubles, which a little prudence might have prevented. But a man in love thinks of nothing but love—more fool he!”

“But why, knowing that such are your present difficulties, why not retrench where you can? Instead of keeping a hunter, and paying a man extravagantly, as you do, why not relinquish your horse altogether, if you really cannot afford just now to keep it? I assure you, *Isabella*, if she does not exactly *know*, greatly suspects your embarrassments to exceed the mere expenditure here, and has herself made

every arrangement the most niggard economy can suggest."

"In what? I don't perceive it," replied Philipson.

"No, for you are a great deal out, and do not see that which is very carefully concealed from you, and which I shall not point out. She cannot exactly pursue the same plan, now Harriet is with her, for *she* has been unfortunately accustomed to a mode of living for some years which makes the best of ours appear intolerable. Do not, for God's sake, add to Bella's other fatigues the misery of fancying you already repent your union with her, or think your child an incumbrance. She is already melancholy enough at the prospect of so soon adding to her nursery; and if you lament it only on the score of expence, I should hope it will be an additional tie on your steadiness and affection, and a greater stimulus to such exertions as may retrieve your affairs, and enable you to provide for so many claimants. I hope I do not offend you by this freedom, Philipson?"

“No, upon my honour,” he replied, much moved: “I am too well aware of the affection which you bear us both, and which has already made so many sacrifices of your own inclination to our comfort. Whatever you say and do is dictated equally by good sense and a good heart, and you may say what you please.”

“And may I, if I find a favourable opportunity, say any thing upon this subject to George? In a very few months he will be able to assist you, without inconvenience to himself, and I hope you will find him willing. I cannot, however, answer for him, for I am not a very favourable judge of his disposition, which is less generous than a *young* man’s ought to be. I did not like to speak of your concerns without your permission, or I should have done so when he was at the Lea in the autumn.”

“You have both feeling and delicacy to manage an affair of this kind properly,” returned Philipson, “and I put my secrets in your power, to do as you please. Only remember, though I can be truly grateful

for kindnesses conferred with good will and without ostentation, I cannot bear to owe any thing to any man who will himself have too high an idea of the obligation, and expect me to be servile. By Jove! I had rather sell my last chair than be indebted to such a one."

"You shall not," replied Althea; "for if I do not find my brother willing to assist you as one man ought to assist another, with liberality and delicacy, I will not accept his favours. In the meantime, keep up your spirits—be kind to Isabella, and concur with her in any scheme which promises to bring advantage and economy with it. Here is my sister's carriage, and here we must soon part."

"I wish I too had a carriage to offer you," said Philipson; "but I'm afraid when you come again we shall hardly have a donkey cart. However, if we have ever any thing worth having, you shall share it—and if we should sink still lower, we will not drag you with us."

"Do not depress my already weak spi-

rits," said Althea: " I leave you most unwillingly ; and remember, Edward, whenever I can be of use or comfort to either of you, I am always at your call—nor, however low fortune may sink you, nothing but *misconduct* can make me think any thing I can do a sacrifice. And now, God bless you !"

Philipson made her take some refreshment ; and the horses on both sides being ready, they parted in a very melancholy mood, and each pursued their solitary way.

Such was the influence of Althea over the mind of Philipson, such his opinion of her sense and right judgment, that convinced she had reasoned with propriety respecting his own expences, and touched with the hints she had given of Isabella's contrary conduct, he parted in a few days with his fine horse and expensive man, whom he replaced with the boy he had discarded. His horse he did not replace. He pursued shooting indeed with greater ardour than ever, and was nearly as little at home, but this was a much less expen-

sive amusement than the other, and much safer. He was attentive to his wife, affectionate to his child, and polite to Harriet, who seemed never to wish for more than politeness, for she seemed born without much of the common affections of life, and not to think them necessary.

Isabella, grateful for this change, wrote in terms of rapturous delight to Althea, to whom her letter conveyed all the pleasure she herself felt. Again Philipson's spirits rose, but it was more from the hopes he entertained of George Vernon's friendly assistance than any thing else; but this Isabella did not suspect; and she therefore hoped some of his embarrassments were happily over, and enjoyed the present gleam of sunshine without anticipating a storm.

Althea was received with great pleasure at Westhaven Park, where she found a small but pleasant party, and traced more contentment in Elizabeth's countenance than usual, the only circumstance which could reconcile her to leaving Isabella. Ar-

lingham's features were never expressive of much, but he seemed cheerful; and they did not *spar*, which was what she hardly expected. George seemed very gay and good-humoured, but seldom mentioned Philipson, except to rail at his extravagance. Althea found she must not be precipitate, and though she knew Edward's anxiety, dared not venture rashly upon her endeavours in his behalf. Isabella's letter made some favourable impressions upon George's heart, and effectually restored Althea's gaiety; and she now entered into Elizabeth's little plans for dances and visits with pleasure.

Mr. Arlingham's birthday was in Christmas week, and all were busy preparing for its celebration, which was to be by a rural ball given to the tenantry. Elizabeth was very desirous to ask both her sisters, her mother, and Philipson; and as Arlingham, if he did not promote, did not object to the plan, she wrote to that purpose. Isabella and her husband decidedly declined it; but Mrs. Vernon offering to leave her own

house and take Harriet's place at Felt-ham, they prevailed on her to accept the invitation, and gladly did she do so. Arlingham grumbled a little at having to send the carriage again so far; but Elizabeth, who, by some strange magic, appeared to have regained much of her influence over him, pacified him, and the chariot was sent to meet her. Here she was in her element, and began to live again; and Althea could scarcely recognize the languid, grave, inert woman, who moped about the parsonage-house or the Lea. Every thing went on most gaily for the birthday; and on the twenty-eighth of December, a larger and more festive party was collected at Westhaven than had been seen there since the present Mrs. Arlingham had presided as its mistress.

Althea had never yet mentioned sir Montague Vavasour, but upon her now venturing to ask whether he was expected at the ball, she first learned from Elizabeth that he was—no one knew where—but certainly gone to marry his cousin.

CHAPTER XIV.



———The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost ! COWPER.

“CERTAINLY gone to marry his cousin !” repeated Althea, as Mrs. Arlingham left the room on being called down. “Well then, may he be happy ! I know not why I should be either surprised or grieved at such an event.”

Althea seated herself at her toilet, and forgot entirely for what purpose, or that she had no time to lose in dressing before the company would begin to arrive. A beautiful wreath of natural geranium and myrtle, with which she had intended to

decorate her hair, fell a sacrifice to the news she had just heard, and which certainly affected her more than she willingly acknowledged, even to herself. She sunk into a complete fit of abstraction, and had entirely forgotten every thing but sir Montague Vavasour and his cousin, till the sound of laughter and bustle on the stairs roused her. She blushed, though her folly was known only to herself; and hastily gathering the fragments of her beautiful wreath, finished dressing, and left her hair unornamented.

Mrs. Arlingham, who knew the circumstances which had rendered sir Montague an object of more than common interest to her sister, smiled significantly at the plainness, almost negligence, of her appearance, and rallied her upon her sudden change of spirits.

Althea feebly denied the charge.

“ Well, as you please,” said Elizabeth; “ but I must give you one piece of advice—Do not let other people perceive it. Every one here knows the reason of Va-

vasour's absence; and there are those amongst us who know also his attentions to you, his high admiration of you, and who suspect that those sentiments are reciprocal on your part. Who do you think Arlingham has picked up and brought here to honour his birthday? The Pringles."

"The Pringles! in the name of goodness, where did he find these horrid people, and why did he bring them here to spoil the pleasure of the evening?—That idiot girl here!"

"Softly!" returned Mrs. Arlingham, laughing: "Have a care what you say of that young lady, for I am greatly mistaken if she will not, some of these days, become a very near relation."

"What do you mean?" said Althea.

"Why, observe well to-night, and then give me your opinion. Watch George's attentions in that quarter."

"Good God! you do not really mean that George, with his ample fortune, can seriously intend to marry a girl whose

money is unquestionably her only recommendation? George is mercenary, I know, but I cannot think *so* ill of him."

"Depend upon it, Althea," replied Elizabeth, more gravely, "George's idol is wealth; and fortunate is it for us that we are not dependent on him, or want his assistance in that way, for I believe that he would see any of us in great distress, particularly if he believed our own imprudence had occasioned it, without the smallest inclination to relieve it by any pecuniary exertions on his part."

"I am more grieved than you imagine to hear you say this," answered Althea, her thoughts reverting to Philipson. "As to Miss Pringle, I only hope such a match will never take place, for I should wish to love my brother's wife, and I'm sure I could neither love nor respect her."

"You would be rather a wonder if you did, for I believe a brother's wife is generally an object of more jealousy and dislike than any kindly feeling. A sister's husband is a different thing. Miss War-

render, you know, used to say sisters-in-law hated each other by instinct. I don't know how far she was right, as Arlingham has, fortunately, no such incumbrances; but I know I never would have submitted to interference from them if he had; and I know I shall hate Mrs. George Vernon, if Miss Phœbe ever does bear the name."

Carriages now rattled up so fast, that Elizabeth was obliged to run away and receive her guests, but Althea remained by herself as long as possible, completely unfitted by the various information of the evening for any real enjoyment in its gaieties. At last, however, she was obliged to descend; and the first objects which claimed her attention were her brother and Miss Pringle, walking up and down the saloon. She leaned languishingly on his arm, with her head, as usual, on one side, and a wide unmeaning smile on her vacant face. George was flirting her fan, and endeavouring to look arch and lively; but George's countenance, like

that of his fair enslaver, was not formed for expression. His features were fine, but they were heavy and uninformed, and his person was thick and high shouldered. His eyes were restless, but not animated, and his complexion light, and without colour.

Althea observed Miss Pringle had some very fine pearls in her hair, and was more dressed than usual, as if bent on conquest. To Althea's great astonishment, she ran eagerly up to her as she passed, and appeared amazingly happy to see her, which, as they had lately merely curtsied when they did meet, which was very seldom, puzzled Althea very much. However, she returned her renewed ardour with civility, and inquired to what accident it was owing that she saw her and Mrs. Pringle so far from home?

"Vhy, to a wery fortunate accident," replied Mrs. Pringle, who had waddled up to Althea, with all the haughtiness of assumed consequence. "You must know, Miss Wernon, ve vas merely a going

through the place in our way to Mr. Pantton's, who lives in the neighbourhood somewhere, and whom we visit, but we could get neither room to stay at the inn, nor horses to proceed with; and so finding how near we was to Vesthaven, we sent to Mr. Arlingham to borrow a pair of horses *just* to take us to Pantton's, and he was purlike enough to send his carriage, with Mr. Wernon in it, and bring us here; and wery much we liked it. Fortunately Miss Pringle had a dress with her which did for the occasion. How do like her pearls?" she added, in a lower voice; "they was a present from sir Montago Wawasour."

Althea coloured, in spite of every effort, at the name, which Mrs. Pringle observed with much exultation, believing the emotion arose entirely from envy and jealousy.

Tea being over, the company adjourned to the ball-room, a large old-fashioned room, hung with tapestry, and ornament-

ed with misletoe, and holly with its scarlet berries. Here the tenants, with their wives and daughters, were assembled ready for the dance, having had their tea and cakes in another apartment. It was generally understood that it was a mixed party, and that the gentry and tenants were expected to interchange acquaintance and civility; so that no one who came of the former class had any pretence for giving themselves airs of superiority, since they were not obliged to degrade themselves by such an intermixture. There were some good figures amongst the elders of the country party. Quilted petticoats of thick dimity, coloured gowns which had been carefully laid by, with their first gloss still on them, with flowers as large as life, and of a much deeper hue—waists down to the hips, and clear stiff lawn handkerchiefs pinned on the outside, and dragged down as tight as the high stays would admit—such was the dress of many of the respectable matrons of the village, with the addition of a stiff

cap with a large bow, and their dark shining hair drawn tightly over a roll. The young women were much more modern, and indeed some of them vied even with their superiors in fashion.

It is indeed very evident that in these times dress is no criterion of situation. Go where we may, there are in every village young women who ape the dress of the great, if they cannot their manners, and are at least more expensively, if not more genteelly attired, than those whose situation is much above them. Many a village fine lady, whose hands are reeking and sodden in the wash-tub in the morning, or begrimed with scowering the grates and fire-irons, comes forth in the evening decorated with her silk or velvet pelisse, her flowers and feathers, worked muslin dress, expensive lace, kid shoes, silk stockings, and no cap. She may pass to the eye of a stranger as a woman of fashion and consequence—but hear her speak! Vulgar jests, ungrammatical expressions,

and a total want of gentility in voice, language, and idea, instantly become too apparent to suffer her to be longer mistaken for a *lady*.

“ The town has ting’d the country ; and the stain
Appears a spot upon the vestal’s robe,
The worse for what it soils.”

Several such *ladies* were present at Arlingham’s ball, and far outdid in splendour the greater part of the real gentlewomen. Nothing could be smarter than they were, nor could the first women in the county expose more lavishly the thinly-attired person.

It was the rule of the ball that the first two dances should be danced by the gentry and tenantry intermixed. Arlingham therefore took a bashful, colouring, half-genteel youth, up to his wife, and she gaily presented her hand, and *led him* to the top of the set. The rest of the ladies shrugged a little, and looked somewhat disdainfully; but Arlingham was absolute, and declared if they did not com-

ply with this rule, they should forfeit all chance to a more congenial partner afterwards; they therefore flounced up to their places, and prepared, the greater part, to give themselves as many airs, and make their awkward looby partners as uncomfortable as possible. Harriet Vernon alone refused compliance, and throwing herself on a sofa, sat wrapped up in her own self-consequence, and doomed to sit still all the evening, for Arlingham positively declared she should pay the forfeit of her pride. Harriet bowed disdainfully, and acquiesced, though against her real wishes, for she was very fond of dancing, and excelled in it. The gentlemen were by no means displeased at the arrangement, for there were some very pretty girls, who understood the art of flirtation as well as their superiors, and practised it as boldly, and were, moreover, evidently not displeased to have such beaux for their partners. Not so the Colins of the party, who, awed and distressed by the rank of the ladies, and by the affectation of con-

descension in some, and real airs of pride and *hauteur* in others, devoutly wished the dances ended, that they might choose from their own acquaintance and equals, and enjoy the recreation. Two or three of the prettiest and smartest girls, however, were monopolized by the gentlemen, and many a heart that night ached with jealousy and envy.

“How high Sally Button holds her head to-night, dancing with that there curly-pated *bow*!” said Miss Crab, the butcher’s daughter; “she’ll fancy herself a beauty now, ten to one, and I’m sure *she’s* no great.”

“Lauk! no,” returned Miss Simpson, whose father kept the Arlingham Arms; “and look at Polly Clark, how she draw up her bare neck! I wonder she an’t ashamed to see how that man stare at her; I warrant she thinks he admire her, poor silly thing! Well, *I’d* lieverer dance of Robin Ledger, for he’s my *ekal*. I hate flouting with min out of my spear.”

“I say, Susan Barker, don’t you mean

to take no notice of me?" said the disconsolate swain, whom, till this eventful evening, she had condescended to acknowledge as her lover, but who seemed now in some danger of being superseded by a handsome young dragoon officer, who continued to dance with her after the prescribed set was finished. Miss Barker (these young ladies being all *misses*) gave her head a quality toss—"Lauk, Mr. Myers!" said she affectedly, "pray don't be giving yourself no airs. I think I have a right to give my company to who I please; I hope that's ondeniable. Indeed I don't know as ever I shall acquaint of you no more."

"Then no more you shan't," replied young Myers, with a spirit that rather startled Miss Barker, who had sense enough to know that it was a bad exchange of his love and a snug farm, for a temporary flirtation with captain Percy. She began to compromise matters a little; but Myers, turning with great disdain from her ad-

vances, asked and obtained the hand of a plain, but well-behaved modest girl, who had long sighed for him, and envied Susan Barker the preference.

Susan, though somewhat alarmed, trusted to the power of her charms, and influence over her lover, and affected still more gaiety.

Harriet Vernon, meantime, cold and weary of a scene in which she took no pleasure, since Arlingham, determined to tease her a little longer, declared she should not dance, quitted her solitary station on the sofa, and walked, with haughty air and majestic step, to the door, intending to sit by her own fire till supper was announced; but as she reached the door, she was delightfully surprised to hear the name of lord Randolph sounded in the hall, and the next moment his lordship had seized her hand, and was rapturously expatiating on the pleasure he felt in finding her there so unexpectedly. With smiles of genuine happiness she now measured back her steps

to her former seat, and congratulated herself that she had not danced, even had her partner been unexceptionable.

Arlingham, to whom his lordship was well known, received with pleasure and politeness this addition to his party; and the several introductions necessary having taken place, particularly to Mrs. Arlingham and Althea, an explanation took place respecting what his lordship called his intrusion, but to which Arlingham, of course, gave a politer epithet.

CHAPTER XV.

These costly toys our silly fair surprise,
The shining follies cheat their feeble sight,
Their hearts, secure in trifles, love despise.

HAMMOND.

“ I ASSURE you, Arlingham,” said lord Randolph, “ I am here by the merest chance, though I own I know no place to

which my wishes would sooner have led me. My carriage broke down close to your approach gates, by which (for me) fortunate accident, I have thus obtained admission to this gay and pleasant assembly."

Arlingham's politeness was again in request; and having assured the noble lord of his extreme happiness in any accident, not of personal danger to himself, which had thus procured him the honour of his presence, he proceeded to explain the reason of such a motley group being collected, and apologize for introducing a person of his consequence amongst them. His lordship was no whit behindhand in courtesy and insincerity with his host, and assured him he enjoyed the scene; shook hands with one or two of the elder farmers, and chucked the prettiest lasses under the chin, with a remark that being an old man, he had a right to such indulgences. All this was performed so good-humouredly, and with such an appearance of affability, that Harriet was as-

tonished, knowing him to be the proudest peer in existence.

The good folks, however, thus honoured, were vastly pleased; and Arlingham and his wife having seen their guest accommodated with every thing needful, and received his promise to remain stationary at Westhaven for some days, recalled the scattered forces, and again commenced dancing; whilst his lordship and Harriet, drawing a little sofa close to the fire, entered into conversation, and she quite forgot her late pique, and became all gaiety and smiles.

Lord Randolph was verging on sixty, and owned himself fifty-two. He was a fine-looking man, and when free from the gout and asthma, tolerably upright and active. A fashionable wig, full curled and powdered, concealed his bald head, and every part of his dress was calculated to set off his figure. As he sedulously concealed himself when his complaints prevented him from shewing off, none believed him the poor wheezing cripple he

really was for half the year, or imagined the gay, courtly, adulating flatterer, was in private a dull, gloomy, ill-tempered, and violent man. No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, it is said, and lord Randolph's waiting gentleman would not have given him exactly the character he aspired to, had he spoken the truth. But Gerard knew very well that truth is not to be spoken at all times, and his lordship accordingly came off with flying colours, for which Gerard was well rewarded. Two or three maiden aunts, and a sister, nearly his own age, were eager to see his lordship a married man, thinking it much better that some worthy woman should be unhappy through his temper, than that the fine estate of Randolph Castle, and several others, should pass to a distant cousin, whom they all hated, and who would inevitably be heir to every thing, in failure of a son to his lordship.

Lord Randolph had no objection to a handsome young wife and a son or two; but the handsome young women, of any

consequence in life, seemed to have a great objection to him, notwithstanding his own apparent suavity of manners and disposition, and Gerard's trumpet of fame. At last, however, he fancied he had found a lady who looked as if she would not despise him, but would be willing to give herself for his title and a good jointure, "and dote upon the exchange." This lady was Harriet Vernon, and his *accident* at Arlingham's gate was very well contrived and performed. 'Tis true, he had been upon sufficiently sociable terms with Arlingham in former times to have privileged his introduction of himself at Westhaven without a plan; but then he must have given some reason for such a visit, and he was desirous of seeing and knowing something more of Miss Vernon, before he absolutely committed himself. He knew she was at Westhaven, and believed that there he should have an excellent opportunity of observing whether her disposition seemed docile, and her manners in every respect such as would justify

his choice. He had met her repeatedly at Mr. Lascelles's, but then he supposed she was always in *company-temper*, and that, he well knew, by self-experience, was sometimes very different from tempers exhibited at home.

It may easily be imagined with how much triumph and delight Harriet now saw him seated by her side, and listened to his courtly compliments. Convinced that a life of seclusion and mediocrity was not calculated to make her happy, and finding by experience how little she could bear privations, after being so long accustomed to elegance and enjoyment, she meditated as serious an attack on the old peer's heart as he did on hers, and displayed as great, and much more genuine, desire to please. The sacrifice of herself to a man three times her own age she held as a trifle, when weighed against the scale of title, fortune, and consequence. She knew not that he was half the year an invalid, or that he was a capricious tyrant in his own family; but if she had, her

own temper was so comfortably apathetic, and her desire for the distinctions already enumerated so great, that she would have made no scruple of accepting the title of lady Randolph.

Thus secretly concordant in opinion, and therefore mutually bent on pleasing, each became every day more complacent towards the other; and when his lordship became thus domesticated at Westhaven, he had almost determined to make the offer, and Harriet quite resolved to accept it. No one else, however, except the confidant Gerard, knew or suspected such an intention on lord Randolph's part, and not even her sisters entertained the most remote idea of such an event being in agitation, or that Harriet would throw herself away so terribly; for so Althea, at least, would have reckoned such a marriage, on the side of a young and lovely girl.

The evening which introduced his lordship at Westhaven ended much more auspiciously to Harriet than it began, and his exclusive attentions, as much so at

least as so well-bred a man could suffer himself to shew, to herself, set her at ease, and opened her heart to the rest of the party. He led her to the supper-table, and seated himself by her; and desirous then to appear as affable as her noble attendant, and do away former unpleasant impressions, she became very civil to the bumpkins she heartily despised.

The greater part of these country folks, unused to such lordly company, felt embarrassed and awkward in lord Randolph's presence, notwithstanding his great condescension, and retired soon after supper. But these were the old people, and some few of the young *men*; the damsels were in general too confident to be abashed by any thing less than royalty, and with many of them it seemed rather a signal for additional coquetry.

George Vernon had been particularly attentive to Miss Pringle all the evening, and she had been delighted with his tender nonsense, of which he had been very lavish; but a *lord* in the party made all

the difference with her and her equally-foolish mother; and poor George exhibited a rueful change of countenance, as he watched the pains they both took to attract lord Randolph's eyes.

Mrs. Pringle had once met his lordship in a party in town, and, never bashful, advanced to claim acquaintance with him, and introduce her daughter.—“I had the honour,” said she, nodding her towering plumes, “to be interdoosed to your lordship at Mrs. Varrender's in Devonshire-street; but wery likely you don't recollect me. This here is Miss Pringle, my daughter, my lord.”

His lordship bowed, and Miss curtsied, and he affected to remember perfectly the introduction of which Mrs. Pringle spoke, and expressed his happiness at meeting her again. A little desultory conversation followed, and then his lordship, very tired, and displeased with his conversation being interrupted with Harriet, walked off without ceremony, to the great annoyance

and anger of Mrs. Pringle and her daughter.

As soon as he was gone they went too; and so little impression had Phœbe made on his heart or eyes, that a few minutes after he proved he did not recollect ever having seen her.

“May I,” said the young officer of dragoons to this young lady, “may I have the pleasure of dancing with you these two dances?”

“I’m very much obliged to you indeed, but I am so sorry I’m engaged *these* two,” replied Phœbe. “I really am quite sorry, and extremely obliged to you. Thank you very much.”

“Who is this grateful young lady?” inquired lord Randolph, fixing his eyes, glass and all, on Phœbe’s face.

Harriet laughed, but Mrs. Pringle and Miss, who overheard the question, were so much offended at the little impression the charms of the latter had made, that they marched off indignantly; and Phœbe re-

turned to her flirtation with George, who gladly hailed her smiles, too wise to quarrel with fifty thousand pounds because their owner was a fool.

The evening at length concluded. Lord Randolph retired to the state apartment, where he and Gerard settled the grand affair of his future union with Harriet, each agreeing that it would do very well; and his lordship persuaded that she was deeply enamoured—and so she was—but not with him. The agreeables, however, attached to him had completely charmed her; and she too retired to dream of matrimony, grand castles, jewels, equipages, and, *perhaps*, happiness.

CHAPTER XVI.

Not he, of wealth immense possess'd,
 Tasteless who piles his massy gold,
 Among the number of the blest
 Should have his glorious name enroll'd;
 He better claims the glorious name who knows
 With wisdom to enjoy what Heaven bestows.

FRANCIS'S *Horace*.

THE following morning Harriet appeared with more than her usual attention to dress and manner. She saw her advantage, and determined to pursue it. She saw that lord Randolph was a great admirer of *style*, both in person and conduct, and this she well understood; and was besides perfectly aware that nature had given her a face and form which required little aid from art to make of the very first order. She was very much the handsomest of the sisters; finely made, with a face of regular and striking beauty; and to those who, like

lord Randolph, preferred fashion to every other attribute, was considered faultless. There were, indeed, some who admired still more the sweetness of Althea's countenance, and the soft elegance of Elizabeth's form. Vavasour liked better the clear dark blue of Althea's melting eyes than Harriet's brilliant and spirited black ones, and thought the expression of mild benignity, and modest good sense, more to be preferred, than the haughty, cold majesty, and self-consequence, conspicuous in Harriet's more dazzling features. But Vavasour was himself quiet and retired from notice, and liked similar qualities in women.

Althea possessed a natural unaffected grace in every movement, thought, and action. Harriet was all study; and though that study was the extreme of fashion and elegance, none but very fashionable people liked or understood it. She *attitudinized* in every possible way. If she threw on a shawl, its folds were disposed in a certain costume—her arm was raised—her foot

extended or withdrawn—her head inclined—precisely according to *manner* and study. All this was exactly calculated to please her noble lover, and he became every moment more impressed with admiration. He longed to make proposals, but prudence checked him, and he continued to observe in silence a few days longer.

Althea alone of the party penetrated the secret; and watching with a diligence inspired by affection, not curiosity, soon saw that the ancient lover's passion, or at least inclination, was observed and approved by Harriet. She saw it with regret, for to her such a union seemed fraught with unhappiness and evil.

The rest of the good folks were all busily engaged in their own concerns; the young ones by flirtation and matrimonial schemes—the old by occupations equally frivolous. George Vernon had prevailed on Arlingham to invite Mrs. and Miss Pringle to a longer stay, to which they had graciously assented; for since my lord would not come forward as Phœbe's admirer, George

was again in high favour; and Mrs. Pringle observed, with great complacency, the vicinity of Lark-Hall to Adderley Manor, on which George spake, and Miss simpered and languished.

Most of the party returned to their own houses immediately on leaving Westhaven, living mostly in the neighbourhood. A small number, who resided farther off, staid a day or two to keep Christmas; and a pleasant company sat down to dinner, determined to feast and enjoy themselves.

“Pray,” said lord Randolph to Mr. Monckton, “can you tell me if sir Montague Vavasour is at Charleville now? I heard some strange rumour of his having gone very suddenly somewhere or other, but I really have forgotten where.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Monckton, “he is certainly gone to Ireland, to marry his cousin, Miss Orford, to whom he has been engaged for many years.”

“Ah, indeed!” replied his lordship, thoughtfully. “Is not that sad engagement done away yet? I hoped, as the mar-

riage did not take place, the whole affair was at an end."

"Is it then so bad a match?" inquired Mrs. Arlingham.

"Why, I hardly know what to call it," his lordship answered. "Miss Orford is a very clever woman—too superior, I think, or *should* think, if she was to be my wife. She is very amiable, I believe, and has, independent of control, seven thousand a-year."

"Has she, faith?" said George Vernon; "then what is there to object to? And why does he not marry directly?"

"Miss Orford is considerably older than Vavasour," returned lord Randolph; "she is, besides, *remarkably* plain in her person, and very singular in her manners and opinions."

"And what could induce him to engage himself to such a queer creature?" said Elizabeth, stealing a glance at Althea's varying cheek.

"They were engaged by parental authority when sir Montague was very

young," his lordship replied; "and the last will and testament of the fathers on both sides provided for its ratification. Miss Orford forfeits her whole fortune, excepting two hundred a-year, if she refuses to marry her cousin; and if the objection arises on his side, he gives up a very considerable proportion of his; and she is *then* bound to marry an Irish cousin of her own name, whom she abhors. The relinquishing a part of his own property would have been easily got over, for no man breathing is less mercenary than sir Montague; but the idea of driving her to marry such a man as Mr. Patrick Orford, was not to be thought of. Hitherto the cousins appear to have understood each other, and remained quietly single, each considering the engagement as subsisting, but without seeming to think of marriage. Some circumstances, however, but I know not what, have all on a sudden hurried Vavasour to Ireland, where Miss Orford has been staying some time, and I understand with a

full determination of marrying immediately. I have always wondered that Constantia Orford, who affects to despise money, should hesitate about giving up her fortune, rather than accept a man who has no sort of regard of that nature for her. He admires and esteems her as a very clever good woman; but love is, and always has been, out of the question; nor does she feel any thing like love for him, except as a relative and an amiable man. I know she does not spend near a thousand a-year out of her large income, so that with her habits a smaller fortune would suit her just as well."

The information thus given by lord Randolph was correct. The engagement between Vavasour and his cousin was as he had represented it; and this was all that he or any other person knew about the matter. His motives for not withdrawing from an entanglement, in which he had scarcely been consulted, are evident—hers not quite so clear. On his part, a generous concern for her happiness

induced him to sacrifice his own, for he well knew how impossible it was to connect such a feeling with a union with Patrick Orford. Her motives will, perhaps, be found equally generous, and that she was not less studious of his felicity than he of hers.

The comments upon this little private memoir occupied the conversation in the dining-room, and was continued by the ladies after they had retired. Althea sought her own chamber, and thought over all she had heard, not without a heart-ache, and much astonishment, at so strange a tale. She could make out nothing satisfactory respecting Miss Orford's motives for a conduct so extremely singular, and she thought selfish, and that lady by no means rose in her good opinion. Every thing she heard of sir Montague, on the contrary, increased her admiration; and, precisely at the moment in which she ought to have forgotten him, she learned to remember him with added esteem.

Althea, however, was not the young woman to sit down and fancy herself unhappy, or irrecoverably gone in a hopeless passion. She returned to the party she had left, hoping they had by that time chosen another topic. Sir Montague, however, was still the subject; and Mrs. Pringle's voice sounded in Althea's ears as she opened the door—"Vell," she was saying, "I don't know how much he may be in love vith this Miss Orford, but I know he vas at von time vastly smitten vith Miss Pringle, and I must think him a little vavering and capricious, in that there business at least. Them pearls that Miss Pringle have got in her hair vas his present, and I think that vas rather a convincing proof that he had his ideas on the subject."

Althea thought she could account for the present very differently, and that gratitude for hospitalities received, and a disdain of lying under obligations to people he despised, had prompted the costly and elegant remuneration; love, she was cer-

tain, had no share in it. Since all hopes of him were now over, either for herself or Althea, Phœbe had condescended to be civil; and Althea again was pestered with love-secrets and affected sentiment, of which George was the new hero. Affairs there went on swimmingly: George, after an interval of a week, during which time the mother and daughter remained at Westhaven, made his bow in form, and was by them referred to Mr. Pringle, for his final consent; and the day was fixed for their all three going to Lark-Hall, this affair having completely set aside Mrs. Pringle's visit to the Pantons, whom she noticed in no other way than by a morning call, having discovered that they were not tolerated at Westhaven.

Unwilling as Althea felt to become a beggar, even for Philipson, she could no longer defer the appeal to her brother she had promised to make, and which she had driven off till the very last moment. The character of George Vernon was well known to her as parsimonious and selfish,

loving none so well as himself, and considering prudence, by which he meant the extreme of saving, as the first virtue. He despised his brother Philipson; and Althea trembled as she attempted to address herself to his prejudices, of which she was well aware. She hoped, however, that on the eve of becoming master of a very good fortune of his own, and a much larger one in right of the woman he was going to marry, for once he would change his nature, and be generous. But "can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Althea, low as her hopes were, not exceeding a *loan*, for of a *gift* she despaired utterly, was disappointed. George shuffled till he could no longer evade a direct answer, and then refused to lend any thing. He declared his intention, however, of giving all his sisters something handsome when he married; and Isabella's should be in money, instead of plate, or whatever else he might have thought of, if Althea thought it would be more acceptable. A present of that na-

ture she knew would not amount to much, but even that little was better in specie; and she begged that both Isabella's gift and her own might be in that shape.

“ Yes, if you desire it, it shall,” replied George, “ though I cannot help saying you are almost as silly as Philipson, and as far from prudence, since I am certain you only request this in order to give your share to him. However, that is your own concern, and I hope you will learn wisdom as you grow older. I have no objection to lend money upon good security; but what can I expect from such a chap as that, but to lose it? What business had he to marry as he did, without taking every advantage which his situation as fellow of a college allowed? Because he was in love, forsooth! as if college fellows had any business to be in love, at least to their own disadvantage. He should have waited for a good living, or, at any rate, have staid and taken his year's income. He was not half prudent enough for one of that sober race. Why, I have known

some of them wait five or six and twenty years for a living, what they call *courting*. That was tiresome, no doubt, but better than marrying as Ned has done, and running the risk of a brat every year, for about twelve or fourteen years."

"Certainly they were the more prudent ones," replied Althea; "but, for Heaven's sake! who would do so that had heart or spirit in him? I know I would never engage myself to such a cold heartless being. And when they do marry at last, what whims and self-willed tempers do they carry home with them, to plague the poor elderly gentlewomen who have been silly enough to wait for them! Accustomed all their lives to please only themselves, they never think of even trying to please a wife, whom they not seldom marry, at last, from a point of honour, wishing her all the time devoutly in her grave, angry because she is grown old and plain, and has imbibed the whims of celibacy, as well as themselves. Then, most likely, he has the gout, from living

too well; and she has the rheumatism. He is grown corpulent, from good eating, and the sloth of content—she thin and withered, from the contrary extremes. If such are the effects of waiting for a living, and positively I think the picture not over-drawn, give me, if I *must* marry, an affectionate cheerful husband, and, if it must be, a house full of children, who will repay with their duty and love in our age, the sacrifice we have made to them in their youth.”

“I never heard you so eloquent, Althea,” said George, laughing; “and truly if such *are* the effects of a college residence too long, I should not envy either husband or wife so situated. I am sorry I cannot, consistently with my opinion of right, do what you wish for Ned—but really he is so extravagant! I know if I lent him the money, instead of paying his debts, he would buy another horse, clap a livery on his boy, and build more temples and more aviaries. Let him draw

on till he gets Fairfield. I *hope* he will have that."

"You have no doubts upon that head, I trust, have you?" said Althea, anxiously.

"Oh no, I know nothing about it, only I think Arlingham is not pleased with Ned, and is a particular sort of man. But I assure you, I never heard him say a word."

Althea distrusted this assertion, and disliked the expression of her brother's face as he talked on the subject—"George," said she, very seriously, "that you do not yourself choose to lend your aid in extricating Philipson from his present difficulties is, I hope, enough for you. You do not, I hope most fervently, use any means to prejudice Arlingham against him too, or prevent *his* assisting him, both now and in the case of Fairfield. I would not think so ill of you. Promise me that you never will."

"I cannot imagine how you came to fancy such things," replied he, in great confusion, but affecting to be offended.

“If Arlingham likes to give him half his fortune, he may, for any interference on my part.”

Althea would have pursued her subject farther, but George declared he heard Miss Pringle calling him, and gladly made his escape from a conversation which began to press him too hard; whilst Althea, sad and disheartened, retired to think over new ways and means, almost despairing of success with Harriet, to whom she meant next to apply.

CHAPTER XVII.

But if such toys can win her lovely smile,
 Hers be the wealth of Tagus' golden sand,
 Hers the bright gems that grow in India's soil,
 Hers the black sons of Afric's sultry land.

To please her eye let every loom contend,
 For her be rifled Ocean's pearly bed—

HAMMOND.

HARRIET heard, with her usual indifference, the tale poor Althea told, with such sad earnestness, of her disappointment in her brother. The offer she had formerly made of herself assisting Philipson if George refused, was now become much more inconvenient than when she first proposed it; for to stay in a family like Elizabeth's, where there was a succession of company at home, and visits abroad, without a proper change of dresses and ornaments, was not to be thought of, par-

ticularly now that lord Randolph was become stationary there, and new plans and hopes suggested themselves to her mind. She saw, or fancied she saw, that he was pleased with an elegant variety in her taste, and was determined not to lose him for want of attention to so important an article as dress. Her five hundred pounds was therefore somewhat diminished, and she was unwilling to deprive herself of the means of continuing her elegant and fashionable attack on his lordship's heart. She offered, however, to lend Philipson a hundred pounds, if that sum was sufficient to be of any use. Althea, who knew not exactly the extent of his wants, neither accepted nor declined the offer, till she had spoken or written to him; and Harriet secretly hoped he would not accept the loan of a sum so insignificant. In the meantime, her ancient lord had many debates with his own heart, and with Gerard, respecting matrimony, not quite willing to resign his liberty, yet hating still more the idea of Randolph Castle passing to a

man he detested. He had written to his sister and his aunts on the occasion, not to ask their advice, but to announce his intention, and their joint reply was expressive of great congratulation to him, themselves, and the lady. Of her conduct on the occasion, he thought there could be but one opinion—she must joyfully and gratefully accept an honour so distinguished, and so much above any hopes she could have had the presumption to form. At length the important decision was made—he *would* marry. Gerard approved the design, and opportunity soon offered of a private interview with Harriet. She had for some time observed her growing influence with the enamoured old peer, and therefore, though highly delighted at the confirmation of all her ambitious hopes, was less evidently surprised and elated than he had expected. He felt a little chagrined that she was not overjoyed, and that dignity, and an appearance of *confer-ring*, rather than *receiving* a favour, marked her acceptance of his hand; however,

he was accepted, and every creature in the household soon knew it, through the joyful indiscretion of George Vernon, whose raptures made ample amends for his sister's affected indifference to rank and splendour. Elizabeth and Arlingham too were highly pleased; and his lordship received thanks and compliments enough from every part of the family but Althea, who felt infinitely more regret at such a match than gratified by the honour. Harriet, she allowed, was less likely to be unhappy at the disparity of years and sentiments than most other young women, for she was proud and ambitious, and did not choose to believe the tales she had formerly heard of his bashaw-like disposition; but, judging by her own feelings, Althea thought that nothing could make amends for age, ill-temper, and a variety of personal infirmities, with which she knew the earl was troubled.

“Have you carefully consulted your heart, Harriet?” said she, after listening to Harriet's enumeration of the advan-

tages attached to such a marriage: "Can you indeed submit to become the wife of an infirm, passionate, capricious old man, merely to obtain equipage and title, and a few useless luxuries, which will be dearly indeed bought, if your happiness is to be the sacrifice?"

"That cannot be the case," Harriet replied; "for in those useless luxuries, as your philosophy is pleased to call them, consists my happiness. I care little enough for his lordship, that I am very willing to acknowledge; but love, as you dream about it, makes no part of my creed. I believe happiness to consist in rank, and splendour and equipage, in a superb house, and elegant society. I cannot even be comfortable without them; and will own to you, that I thought with horror of going back to the Lea, or to Philipson's. The sun glares horribly through white dimity curtains, reflected by a bright red and yellow Scotch carpet. A vulgar joint of meat, relieved by beans and bacon, and a fruit pudding with Lisbon sugar—

what can be so sickening! I tremble at the idea of ever being condemned to such fare; and really had some thoughts of going out governess, to escape such living—this sumptuous entertainment too washed down with a glass of vile orange or currant wine, in a thin tall decanter. Oh for champagne or claret—or old hock in its appropriate green glass! I would marry a Caliban, Althea, to obtain such luxuries; and lord Randolph is not quite that.”

“If such are indeed your sentiments, I can only pity you, but shall not attempt to reason you out of them,” replied Althea. “I can only hope you may find all the happiness in grandeur which you now anticipate, and that Randolph Castle will give you all your wishes.”

“If Randolph Castle, or some such place, does not, depend upon it nothing inferior ever will,” said Harriet. “I should have no objection if the earl had been young and handsome; but I am not particular about it, so long as he is rich,

and I have a good jointure. I shall do as I please, of course. A young woman marries an old man, in the full persuasion of exercising unbounded and unchecked authority. I have no attachment to any one else, and do not doubt but I shall make a very good countess, and be very well satisfied. The only things I don't like are the three old maids, who have been so long accustomed to rule at Randolph Castle, and may not like to resign the reins of government to me—his aunts and sister, I mean. But, however, their reign is over there as soon as I enter, and they must abdicate to me.”

“I can but wonder to see how differently people of the same family think and feel,” said Althea. “If I were going to marry this man, I should not be gay and careless as you are. I should think of all the unpleasant as well as the agreeable circumstances attending such a union, and ten to one but I should be frightened, and draw back.”

“But,” replied Harriet, “I see no un-

pleasant circumstances. If you do, pray don't point them out; for though I probably should view them in a different light, the representation might disturb me, determined as I am to be satisfied. As to our different modes of feeling and acting, that is all the effect of different education. We were at the same school, I grant you, and in our early years heard the same opinions, and imbibed many similar ideas; but all that is greatly done away when we begin to mix in the world. Had Elizabeth been situated as I was, she would have been a second Harriet. She is, I grant you, married as well as if she had; but had not Arlingham been thrown in her way, and luckily surrendered his heart to her charms, she would have been equally happy with a country parson as you or Isabella, merely from never having seen any thing better. I was, *as it happens*, fortunately thrown into a different sphere of action, and received impressions very unlike those you cherished in solitude and mediocrity. But

I am as willing as you can be to allow, that had I not had a chance of marrying, as I now have, it would have been any thing *but* fortunate for me to have been for a time accustomed to situations and indulgences which necessarily gave me a distaste for humbler life. We are all the creatures of habit; and had I children, in a situation like my mother's, I would never suffer any of them to live away from their family in the manner I did, thus risking their happiness, by bringing them back, after years of indulgence, to privations and scenes for which they must be wholly unfitted."

Mrs. Vernon's consent to Harriet's marriage was rather extorted than given; but it *was* given, and that was sufficient; and preparations were immediately commenced at Arlingham's for its celebration there. Lord Randolph went to the Lea, and was introduced to Philipson and Isabella, who, as well as Mrs. Vernon, were much more pleased with him than they had expected. His manners were always elegant, except

when rage conquered reason, and that was never the case in company. He expressed the greatest regard and admiration for Harriet, and the settlements he offered were liberal in the extreme. Mrs. Vernon could make no objection to the match, except the disparity of years and situation, which, in her opinion, was always a great one. She accompanied lord Randolph back to Westhaven; and Elizabeth sent a pressing invitation to Philipson and Isabella to go to the wedding, which, however, they declined. Mrs. Vernon was not able to leave home quite so soon as she intended; for the very day on which she was to begin her journey, George arrived, and she was obliged to defer it, much against lord Randolph's inclination, to another day. He was too polite, however, to suffer his vexation to become visible; and having had some slight acquaintance with sir Thomas Cotman in former times, he gladly availed himself of it now, to escape from negotiations similar to those he had just been engaged in.

The Cotmans, delighted with such a guest, were happy to give his lordship a dinner; and many and shrewd were the questions they put, in order to learn what could possibly have brought him to the Lea. But he baffled their curiosity; and though they did make out that Mrs. Vernon was going back with him to Westhaven, they could learn nothing more, nor any circumstance which led to a suspicion of his intended connexion with the family. George too they found had accompanied the Pringles back to Lark-Hall, and was now at home; and Mrs. Pringle, in the bustle and agitation of so important an event as the marriage of her daughter, was not quite so guarded before the servants, but what they easily discovered her secret, which, of course, was a secret no longer. What they knew, the neighbourhood were acquainted with very speedily; and lady Cotman knew, in less than six hours after George's return, that it would answer no purpose for Miss Cotman to be civil, or affect a taste for farming and ru-

ral life any longer. Lord Randolph was importuned on all sides to stay some little time at Adderley, or if he must go to Westhaven, to return again to them as soon as his visit there was over. To all this excess of politeness his lordship returned politeness still more excessive, and left them in great doubt whether their invitation was accepted or declined.

Poor Mrs. Vernon seemed destined to witness in her family two marriages which she could not from her heart approve. She feared for the happiness of her daughter in so unequal a union, for *she* knew how much was to be considered beside its splendour; and much as lord Randolph's apparently-amiable manners had reconciled her to himself, she yet dreaded the effects of situation on a girl suddenly raised to grandeur and rank. Miss Pringle she objected to, as a mere weak, uninformed, romantic young woman, whose only recommendation was a large fortune (which George could have done very well without), and a very good temper, or rather

the silly easiness of temper of one who never thought, and was pleased without knowing why. She soon found that to refuse her consent was of no avail, since her son had only asked it as a matter of form and civility, predetermined to please himself, whatever she might say. Having therefore represented, as she thought it her duty to do, such objections as appeared to her of some importance, which George confuted if he could, and if he could not, coldly passed over as of no consequence in his opinion, she gave a reluctant acquiescence; called on her new daughter-elect, as ceremony required she should; and then, not being consulted any farther in the business of settlements, and so forth, she took her leave; and early the next morning stepped into the splendid carriage, so soon to be her daughter's, and was followed by her noble son-in-law, with all the alertness of a man of sixty. They reached Westhaven that evening, and the marriage was fixed at the distance of a week.

CHAPTER XVIII.

For marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.

The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE week which intervened before the wedding was passed by Harriet in writing to town for bridal finery, and inspecting them when they arrived. The small fortune to which she was entitled lord Randolph gave up to her as a wedding present, and, forgetful of all that Althea had told her respecting Philipson's embarrassments, she lavished away on dress and ornaments those hundreds which would have made him so comfortable. A hint from the indignant Althea stopped her for a moment, and a *loan* of two hundred pounds certain-

ly did remove his *most* pressing troubles. She promised to make the loan a gift, if lord Randolph's future generosity enabled her to do so.

"But," said she, "I know too well the difference between a bride and a wife not to reserve to myself a supply, if my lord's liberality should fail. Now he would give me, or promise me, half his fortune; but times may change, and probably will, and I may live to find even this trifle, comparatively speaking, a great sum. I shall send Mrs. Philipson a little present—shall it be for herself, her child, or her house? You know better than I do what would suit."

"I believe, if you intend to send her any thing of *value*, money would be of more real service to her than any thing else," replied Althea; "and so it would to me, if, as you told me yesterday, you mean to buy me pearl ornaments. To me they would be of no great use. I have told George the same."

This was not what Harriet intended, for

she felt that she could not give *shabbily* in cash, whatever she might have done in other ways. She gave Althea, for herself and Isabella, more through ostentation than regard, fifty pounds, which was more than Althea expected, though not more than Harriet could afford to give. The unfortunate estrangement from her family, which had given her ideas incompatible with the situation to which she *then* seemed destined, had also withdrawn her affections from the sisters, whom she considered as her inferiors, and her heart became contracted, in proportion as she increased in fortune and rank. They remembered her as the youthful companion of their sports, and as equally dear to all; as sharing the same treatment, the same instruction, and looking forward with similar views. She, if she recalled such times at all, remembered them only with wonder how she could ever like any thing so vulgar, or be satisfied with a view of the future, so gloomy and undesirable.

The week of probation was at length expired, and the evening came, which, by a bishop and special licence, was to make Harriet the most enviable woman on earth—in her own opinion—merely, however, in reference to title and grandeur; he who was to bestow these advantages was only regarded in that light; and could she have obtained them without his participation, she would very willingly have renounced him for ever. But she was forced to accept the bad with the good; and as he was only an object of complete indifference, not of dislike, she was tolerably careless about it.

Arlingham's saloon was brilliantly illuminated for the occasion, and at eight o'clock Harriet was saluted as countess of Randolph—a sound of more harmony than that of the spheres. Here then ambition rested; she was at the height of her wishes; and, secure that nothing could now deprive her of the proud pre-eminence she had so long panted for, she gave way to the most vivid anticipations of future happiness, in

the regal magnificence of Randolph Castle, where she intended to "reign and rule without control." Her mother and Althea were infinitely more agitated by that awful ceremony, which involves our whole future life, than herself. She was calm and collectedly haughty, and convinced every one present that lord Randolph would lose none of his dignity through too much condescension on the part of his countess.

Mrs. Vernon and Althea passed some time in conversation on this extraordinary marriage, and thought with pain on many probable infelicities, which the less-thinking or less-feeling bride never allowed to enter her imagination. Elizabeth was more worldly than either her mother or Althea, and saw the affair in the same dazzling light as Harriet herself, looking forward to many a gay and brilliant visit in Cheshire, where Randolph Castle was situated.

The weather was now so fine and clear, and lord Randolph so impatient to get home, that the second day after his marriage he and the countess took leave of her

family, having vainly entreated Althea to accompany them, and commenced their journey. Mrs. Vernon returned home, and Althea sent by her the loan, and the full gift of Harriet to herself as well as Isabella, with a sincere hope that it might be enough to satisfy Philipson's most urgent wants. She wished to have returned with her mother; but Mrs. Charlton had sent her word that in a few days she should be at Westhaven, and particularly desired her to go back to Torrington Lodge for a few weeks, to which Althea had agreed.

Mrs. Vernon, as well as Althea, had been both pleased and surprised at the apparent increase of harmony between Elizabeth and Arlingham, so different from what they had of late observed. Elizabeth seemed to have regained much of her lost influence, and carried every thing with a very high hand, so much so, that Althea was rather fearful lest she should relapse into the domineering manners which had before so much and so naturally

offended him. Some latent cause appeared hidden behind Elizabeth's return to power; but whatever it might be, she concealed it carefully whilst other witnesses than Althea were present, and the majority of her guests went away in the full persuasion of their being the happiest pair in the world. But their departure seemed the signal for discontent and murmuring, and a total reverse of Elizabeth's lately-pleasant behaviour.

"Lord! how insufferably stupid will Westhaven be now!" said she, a day or two after she found herself without company. "Arlingham, I must go to town positively. You have no objection of course."

"I don't see why it should be a matter of course so entirely," he replied, sullenly, yet looking rather fearful of an approaching storm. "I have no wish to go to town, and I'm sure you have had gaiety enough here for some time."

"Yes, and what a horrid contrast does this empty place present now!" said she,

with an affected shudder. "I seem to wander about like a creature alone in the world. No—I must go somewhere. If Vavasour were at home, I would go to Charleville. I cannot think, by-the-bye, why you would not let me go to Randolph Castle with the earl and countess."

"Why now, just consider the distance, and the vast expence of a journey into Cheshire and back again," replied Arlingham, "and tell me what would have been the use of it, after having had Harriet here so long?"

"The use!" she answered, with a peevish frown; "I talked of the pleasure, not the use, of the journey. But, however, you seem positive, and so am I. Rather than not go somewhere, I will go with Althea to Torrington Lodge, and see those two old twaddlers, Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Amy Finch, whom Althea praises so much about. When shall you go, Althea?"

"You need not trouble yourself about that," said Arlingham, now thoroughly angry, "for you will not leave Westhaven

at present. I cannot afford any journeys, after such a gay expensive Christmas as I suffered you to keep. I have not money for all your whims and follies, and you must content yourself at home."

"No, Mr. Arlingham," Elizabeth replied passionately; "no, sir, you have not money for my follies, my decent and proper pleasures—you spend too much on your own scandalous amusements. The money which I might spend, respectably at least, is required for the service of——"

"Elizabeth!" exclaimed Arlingham, in a tone of extreme anger, and looking both frightened and foolish; "Elizabeth, desist! Do not forget your promise, for I think I have not failed in my part of the compact. You shall not expose me to Althea."

Althea immediately arose to quit the room, but her sister caught her hand, and bursting into a passion of angry tears, vehemently insisted on her remaining—"You shall know all," said she; "you shall hear how that man deserves to be exposed to

you and the world. Yes, he keeps his paltry riches from me to bestow them on Miss Kitty Summers—a vulgar wretch, who has not an idea beyond the finery his infamous conduct enables her to heap on her ugly person. It was to hide this disgraceful secret, and remove the object of it, that I was *kindly* permitted to visit my family; but I discovered it all through a kind and feeling friend, and——”

“I will hear no more,” said Althea, sternly, “for all I do hear gives me an opinion of my sister I grieve from my soul to entertain.”

“Do *you* then encourage such conduct? Is this the morality of your exemplary Mrs. Charlton?” said Elizabeth.

“No, far from it,” answered Althea: “no one can condemn your husband, if such has been his conduct, more than I do, or than Mrs. Charlton would——”

“*If* such has been his conduct!” interrupted the indignant wife—“*If!* Do you then doubt me? Ask that conscience-struck man there if it be true. He own-

ed it to me, and will not dare to deny it to you, or any one. Ask him."

"No," replied Althea, "I have no right to question Mr. Arlingham; and pardon me, Elizabeth, if I say that after such conduct on your part as I have this morning witnessed, much of my pity for you on so trying an occasion is lost, and transferred, together with my severest abhorrence of his crime, to your husband."

"Hear *me*, Miss Vernon," said Arlingham, much agitated.

"No," answered Althea; "I would listen to neither. Right or wrong, I am not capable of deciding on a point so delicate, and on which I ought not to be consulted. I am shocked and wounded beyond measure at Mrs. Arlingham's violent exposure of that which she ought rather to have hidden from even suspicion. She has behaved towards you with rudeness—indelicately towards me. You, Arlingham, I fear, have offended against virtue and morality, and insulted your wife by the gross deviation. But, for Heaven's

sake! do not make me a judge on either side. Allow me to retire, and do not ask me to return to you till this bitter quarrel is adjusted between you. I cannot bear to witness a dispute in which I know not how to interfere properly. You are both so much to blame, that I hardly know to which side to lean. Elizabeth, I will not be detained; nor would *you* find an advantage in attempting it, since I should only stay to recommend you, though the person most injured, to seek a reconciliation."

Althea then left them; and the quarrel having been interrupted by her interference, subsided into a sullen calm, each ashamed of their own conduct—indignant at that of the other—and determined not to seek a reconciliation at the expence of their own dignity and *proper spirit*.

Althea found them in this agreeable state of mind when she descended to join them at dinner, which she did at Elizabeth's earnest entreaties, and promises of being quiet at least. Convinced that she could do no good, by remaining longer at Westhaven, to

two people obstinately determined to quarrel with their own happiness and each other, she wrote that afternoon to Mrs. Charlton to hasten her arrival, and take her as soon as she could to Torrington Lodge; and two days after her letter reached its destination, Mrs. Charlton's carriage and housekeeper arrived for Miss Vernon, with a letter excusing her own appearance, on the plea of indisposition—a plea which Althea well comprehended.

CHAPTER XIX.

~~~~~

Oh! how thou hast with jealousy infected

The sweetness of affiance!

SHAKESPEARE.

ALTHOUGH Althea refused to listen to the two angry combatants, each eager to vindicate their own conduct, she could not object to attend to Elizabeth when by themselves; but in spite of all the varnish which self-love could put on, and all the kind

prejudice which a sister's affection could feel, Althea could not excuse Elizabeth's behaviour, though she, on every account, infinitely more condemned Arlingham. That he had been guilty of gross misconduct and infidelity was not to be denied; but Althea discovered, from her sister's own statement, that he had frequently walked off in a passion from his own house in an evening to get rid of her intolerable teazings, and chance had then thrown in his way an artful and unprincipled girl, who had rather been the seducer than the seduced. He tried, of course, to keep a transgression of this kind, of which he was soon weary (for Arlingham was not an immoral man), a secret from his wife; but there is always, as the Critic says, "some d—d good-natured friend" to make those matters public; and the Pantons, who hated him, not entirely without a cause, had no greater pleasure than in divulging the disgraceful affair to Elizabeth, who still continued to notice them, in defiance of her husband's wishes and anger. Instead



of checking with contempt the vile tale, she listened with avidity, and with more rage than wounded affection, to the account of her wrongs, aggravated by malice, and repeated with all the inflaming cant of pretended friendship and feeling. She promised silence; but her promise was soon forgotten in the passion of the moment, when after tea he took his hat, as usual of late, and prepared to go out, whether to Miss Kitty Summers's cottage, or not, she did not stay to inquire. Then the whirlwind raged; Arlingham, too much astonished and too conscious to attempt a denial, or even an exculpation, stood transfixed, and looking very guilty, and very foolish.

There are those who can conceive from their own feelings all that a jealous and enraged woman would utter upon such an occasion; from those who never have experienced that fatal passion, it may be wise to conceal the intemperate lengths to which it will carry its unhappy votaries. Love had no share in Mrs. Arlingham's jealousy;



therefore no gleams of relenting tenderness interposed to moderate her anger. Wounded pride, passion, contempt, every feeling which disdain could bring with it, swelled her heart and actuated her tongue, and Arlingham, with some reason, believed he had paid half his penance in being compelled to listen to invectives so violent. Ashamed of himself, he owned there was some justice in her reproaches, though he could not help referring her to her own conduct for many of the errors of his—a reference which did not make her temper more placid. A scene of sad recrimination followed, and reconciliation was at last obtained by Arlingham's promising to give up Miss Kitty, and indulging Elizabeth with a house full of company at Christmas; he demanding, with great propriety, an entire renunciation of all intercourse on her part with the Pantons. With this she was obliged to promise implicit compliance; and she also promised to conceal the whole affair from her family, and particularly from Althea, whom Arlingham really re-

spected. But this unlucky *faux pas* had given her a sort of pre-eminence over her husband, which she never failed to take advantage of, and she had used it as a pretence for extorting many indulgences from him he was not much disposed to grant. The consciousness, however, of having insulted and injured her, made him tolerably submissive, and he gave up his own wishes to hers as a peace-offering. Indeed, so much was he humbled in his own opinion, much more so than he chose to shew, that by a different and more delicate mode of acting, which policy, if not affection, should have pointed out to her, she might now have established her power more firmly than ever. But Elizabeth's temper was too violent and haughty to allow her to think of any thing but making him ashamed of himself: and believing she had now a never-failing claim upon him, she expected to be in every thing obeyed, and to reign absolute and uncontrolled. She tightened the chain till it snapped for ever, and by her injudicious exertion of authority, re-

luctantly granted her, again forfeited the influence she might have secured.

Habit has, unfortunately and unjustly, rendered venial in man the same crime which, in a woman, is never forgotten or forgiven; and Arlingham, though at first really repentant and grieved at his error, soon set his conscience at rest, by recollecting he was no worse than other men, and should be no worse received in society, and that his wife had amply avenged herself in the licence she had allowed her tongue, and the greater power she had assumed and been indulged in; and though he did not *intend* to transgress any more, he ceased to trouble himself about the error he had already committed.

Althea, of course, heard only one side of the question, it being a subject on which she did not choose to converse with Arlingham, particularly as she was obliged to confess her sister had acted so materially wrong in her whole married career; and she would not condemn her to him, and could not excuse her. Whatever Eliza-

beth's augmented influence might have been by proper management at this critical period, Althea was convinced it was now lost for ever, and that this last burst of unprovoked passion, and the exposure of her husband to her own family, contrary to her promise, had rendered him cool and callous to the future. If they continued together, she saw only indifference and wretchedness for Elizabeth, at least, since, with his obstinate and naturally-reserved temper, she had very little to expect for herself; and he, conscious that he was betrayed to her own friends as a libertine, had no farther terms to keep, since he had lost his character where most he wished to preserve it. Arlingham well knew, that however leniently the world in general might consider a fault like his, Althea would despise him, and never again think of him as a character to be admired and respected; and this, as he really thought so highly of her, he could not bear without regret, and it heightened every angry impression against his wife. Elizabeth her-



self, after the effervescence of passion was over, like all angry people, bitterly lamented having given way to it; and finding a kind of protection and relief in Althea's presence, earnestly besought her to remain, at least some little time longer, at Westhaven; and to give more weight to her entreaties, she urged them in Arlingham's presence, but not in a way to have much influence over Althea's fixed determination of going.

"Now do, Althea," said she, "be persuaded to stay a little while. I know Arlingham will do nothing but quarrel when you are gone, he is so angry with me. He forgets all the provocation I had to say what I did, and all his own faults, and only remembers mine."

"No, Mrs. Arlingham," he answered coldly, "I shall not quarrel with you, rest assured. You and I shall in future act independently of each other. I shall not condescend to dispute upon any point. You have spoken your mind with a freedom which would certainly authorize my



doing the same; but I only wish to observe, that I shall in future be master of my own actions, and that neither anger, reproaches, or tears, will have any effect on me. You have exposed me to the person I most regard and esteem in your own family—you have broken your promise with me—and though you shall have nothing reasonably to complain of, you shall make your will conform to mine, and I will please myself. Miss Vernon, I wish you to stay here as long as you please—I will not say as long as you find it agreeable, because you would in that case depart immediately. You shall ever find a home here, as long as you may want or wish it; but I do not ask you with any assurance of being influenced in my conduct by your presence. I will never give Elizabeth again any real cause of complaint, but I cannot think of, or feel, for her as I have done; nor will she again be able to mould me to her purposes, even by her blandishments, at least not till I am much less irritated; and sure I am, her reproaches will *never* have any other effect

than that of driving me from home, in search of better tempers, and more agreeable companions, elsewhere."

Arlingham bowed to Althea as he finished, and walked off; and Elizabeth, repentant and alarmed, because she believed he would deprive her of every pleasure, gave way to more real grief than she had ever felt before. She had never seen him so positive; and finding that Althea would really have no power to lighten the evils she had so materially brought upon herself, and that she had actually written to Mrs. Charlton to fetch her away, she said no more; and at the time appointed, Althea, after a very bitter parting with Elizabeth, and a very polite one with Arlingham, went to seek tranquillity, and ask advice of Mrs. Charlton.

CHAPTER XX.  
~~~~~

I'll give thrice so much land
To any well-deserving friend ;
But in the way of bargain, mark ye me,
I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair. SHAKESPEARE.

ALTHEA found her good friend as glad as ever to see her, and she found her alone ; for Mrs. Amy Finch had gone suddenly away, two days before, to nurse her nephew, who had come to her house at Kensington ill. Mrs. Charlton was always placid, but she was generally remarkably cheerful too ; but now Althea fancied she was grave and ill at ease, and though she talked of old times, and took the same interest as ever in all that concerned Althea and her family, still there was an air of abstraction, and a brow of care, which could not escape Althea's observation. She noticed

it at length, and Mrs. Charlton owned that she was uncomfortable.

“ You know, my dear Althea,” said she, “ I am not apt to despond, and you know also that I am not so tenacious of this world’s goods as to repine at a partial deprivation of them on my own account. But I have just now several claims upon my purse, which I am unable to answer as I wish ; and I’ll tell you why. I am threatened with a lawsuit respecting the Irish estate, which, as you know, is one of the greatest sources of my wealth. A claimant has sprung up, after more than forty years’ possession of this property, and I am under the necessity of going myself to Ireland, to answer some questions, and produce some important documents, in person. I am most particularly uncomfortable at this ; for at this very time my poor young friend, Mrs. Sedley, and her abominable, though specious husband, have come to such extremities as to talk seriously of parting ; and my influence

might have been of great use there. Mrs. Amy Finch, who had most kindly offered to go with me to Ireland, is obliged at this time to return home; and, in short, every thing seems to be so unpropitious to my wishes, that I confess I am quite out of spirits, and much disposed to be completely melancholy, which, you can vouch for me, I very seldom am."

"If," replied Althea, "my company to Ireland can be either of use or comfort to you, my dear friend, I am very sure my mother will not hesitate to give her consent to my going; and mine, you know, you may command. When do you go?"

"I expected this offer from your affectionate heart, my dear girl," answered Mrs. Charlton; "but I cannot think of taking you from your sisters and friends, to whom you are so necessary. And yet, Althea, I shall relinquish your society with more regret than I would have you suspect. It would be a great comfort to me certainly—but still——"

Mrs. Charlton's wishes were so evident, and she had made so many sacrifices for Mrs. Vernon's family, that Althea could not bear to desert her at this moment, and without urging the matter farther, wrote that very night to her mother, representing the affair exactly as it was, and begging her permission to attend Mrs. Charlton. To this request Mrs. Vernon could not deny her assent, though in her heart she languished for Althea's return; for she found but little comfort in Philipson's family, and yet was obliged to be frequently there. Circumstanced as Mrs. Charlton was, neither Althea or her family could ask to meet before she left England, since any delay might be of most serious consequence; and at the time of year in which the voyage was to be performed, it was but too probable the elements themselves would conspire to retard their progress. Althea, therefore, with more sadness at heart than she suffered Mrs. Charlton to perceive, in her usual manner sat down to write to Isabella and

Philipson that farewell which she could not take personally, and with much and true affection she mingled judicious and delicate advice. Over these letters Isabella could only weep and lament, and Philipson himself felt very severely the loss of Althea's equal mind and tranquil cheerfulness. Mr. and Mrs. Arlingham were sufficiently near Torrington Lodge to allow of a personal adieu, and they spent the last day of Althea's sojourn in England with her there. Their manners, though no longer thwarting and bickering to each other, were far from pleasant or consolatory to so anxious an observer as Althea. They seemed to have fallen into a state of complete and apathetic indifference, and barely to endure each other with tolerable civility. Convinced, however, that advice was thrown away, and unwilling to revive old conversations, or leave an impression of disgust and anger in the minds of either towards herself, Althea did not embitter the last moments

by grave exhortation, and they parted with more apparent cheerfulness than any of them felt. However little attention Elizabeth paid to the advice of Althea, she yet felt its value, and she could not help acknowledging a sort of desolate void in her bosom, when she reflected on the distance which would soon divide them, and that she should no longer be able to ask that assistance, or consult that sound judgment, which had sometimes so much befriended her. The carriages left Torrington at the same time, and Mrs. Arlingham devoutly wished she had been Mrs. Charlton's companion instead of her husband's.

A rapid journey brought our travellers into Cheshire, where Randolph Castle was situated, and they even passed some of the magnificent woods which belonged to the estate. Mrs. Charlton felt how natural it was for Althea to wish to see the place which was now inhabited by her sister, and offered even to delay her progress for one day to give her that pleasure;

but to this Althea would not consent, assuring her she should much prefer stopping a few days on their return, when they could better judge of Harriet's situation and chance for happiness than now, so soon after her marriage. The amicable dispute was settled at the inn where they changed horses, and where they learnt that the earl and countess were not yet returned to the castle. Althea could not resist asking a few questions of the innkeeper, relative to his lordship's general character, expecting, as the man had no idea of any connexion between them, to hear the truth.

"Why really, ma'am," replied Mr. Parry, "I believe my lord is very well when he is pleased, but it is no easy matter to please him. He has terrible bad health, and I fancy those who have to nurse him don't find the task very pleasant."

"Is he liberal? and does he live in a good style, and keep much company?" asked Althea.

"Oh dear, no, ma'am," Mr. Parry an-

swered: "I don't suppose my lord gives a dinner three times a-year; but then he lives in great splendour by himself; and I hear that he has every thing in just as much style, and just as expensive, as if he had a house full of company. Perhaps his wife, who is, I hear, young and beautiful, may alter the old plans a little; but she must take care, for my lord is as jealous as he is proud; and that is saying no little."

Althea sighed at this report, but asked no farther, fearing to hear any thing yet more unpleasant.

Notwithstanding the season was not exactly such as rendered a sea-voyage desirable, the party encountered less danger and inconvenience than they had expected. Mrs. Charlton had frequently been in Ireland before; and both her man and maid-servant had accompanied her, and were therefore aware of what they should have to contend with. Poor Althea suffered enough to make her hail with delight the bay of Dublin, where a few days'

rest entirely restored her. Mrs. Charlton had written to her agent from England, who had, in compliance with her request, provided a very comfortable house for her in one of the best streets in Dublin; and her acquaintance there being of the first order of persons, Althea soon found herself in the midst of society, whose proverbial hospitality, had she been so disposed, would have engrossed every leisure moment. Mrs. Charlton was soon fully employed with lawyers, and surrounded with papers; and having introduced Althea to two or three particular friends, was compelled to give up her own time almost wholly to the business which took her there, and which seemed to be of a much more complicated and serious nature than she had at first imagined.

When Althea, in the first ardour of friendship, and eagerness to oblige Mrs. Charlton, offered to become her companion to Ireland, she had totally forgotten that sir Montague Vavasour was in

that country. The recollection, however, soon recurred, and with it a sensation to which she knew not how to give a name. She scarcely knew whether she hoped to meet *him* or not; but she earnestly desired to become, by some means, acquainted with Miss Orford, whose character appeared to her a very singular one, and in whom she took a great interest. For some time she neither saw or heard of any such persons as either sir Montague or Miss Orford, and began to think she should leave Ireland ungratified. Her residence in that country was destined to be much more lengthened than she either wished or expected; for some circumstances occurred after she got there, which involved her, as a witness, in Mrs. Charlton's business, and prevented her returning to England without her, had she been so inclined; and before she did return, she was introduced to Miss Orford. But as no particular events took place during the first three months of her stay at Dublin, we shall

leave her there, and look back to the period of her quitting England, and the friends she then left to wish for her return.

CHAPTER XXI.

~~~~~

Oh, my good lord! why are you thus alone?

For what offence have I this fortnight been

A banished woman?

— — — — —

A habitation giddy and unsure

Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHERE every thing conspired so mutually to please, as in the case of George Vernon and Miss Pringle, little delay was necessary, besides that given to settlements and bridal paraphernalia. The first were indeed ready before the last; and Mrs. Pringle was for some weeks enveloped in satins, silver muslins, laces, and vel-

vets, so much so, that she had hardly time to pay her accustomed visits and talk.

“ Vell now,” said she, “ look here, Phoebe, my dear. This here sprigged muslin over white satin, trimmed with *macklin* lace, vill just do for the vedding; and I think this other vill do for morning dresses.”

“ I prefer this thinner one,” replied Phoebe, in a languid tone; “ but as you please. I shall look at it, and think of George alone.”

“ Vell, that may do a little vwhile,” replied Mrs. Pringle, laughing. “ This here muslin, howsever, is the best; for you’ll have a deal more *vearth* out of it than out of t’other. There is the gold ornaments for your green welwet pelisse and hat. Where’s the gold star for the front? Oh! here ’tis. Vell, now ve may as vell go and pay some farewell wisits.”

The wedding took place in due time, and the happy pair set off to pass the honeymoon in Lun’on, and see all the sights.

Mrs. Vernon partook of the sumptuous breakfast prepared by Mrs. Pringle; but Philipson and Isabella, though invited, did not attend, as George gave considerable offence by not asking him to perform the ceremony. The distribution of bride-cake conveyed more envy and heart-burnings than pleasure to many who received it; and had Philipson been able to persuade his wife, he would have returned the portion which arrived at the parsonage, accompanied by a note of twenty pounds, addressed to the little Althea, for a coral necklace, but in reality a shabby gift to her mother.

Some weeks passed on, unmarked by any event. Philipson, though relieved by Harriet's loan and Althea's generous gift from his greatest and most immediately pressing embarrassments, was yet too much involved to recover his ease of mind, and sought to escape reflection by seeking society. His temper, which was originally rather careless than good, became by these circumstances much soured, and he grew



first negligent at home, and then harsh. Any application for money, though made as seldom as possible, threw him into a passion; so that, to avoid altercation, Isabella sometimes was compelled to contract little bills, which, when the time came, she found herself unable to pay, and thus increased the evil for which she found only a temporary remedy. Mild and gentle herself, and unused to the starts of passion and fits of ill-humour to which her husband now frequently gave way, her health and spirits drooped alike, though she exerted herself to conceal the failure of both from him. Unknown to her, he had taken up almost all her little fortune, first in furnishing the vicarage, and then in paying some of his old college debts, which could be evaded no longer. Their income thus was lessened, whilst an increasing family rather required its augmentation. She still looked with confidence to Fairfield, as the mine of wealth which was to make all things comfortable, and she frequently endeavoured to raise her husband's gloomy

spirits with the same cheering hope; but he no longer felt that conviction of better prospects, though, as Arlingham had not declared a change of sentiment on the subject, he did not wholly despair, and would not check her anticipation of the future, or teach her to dread evils which *might* not arrive. But this irritation of mind and spirits led to much ill, for it rendered him unable to take pleasure in those domestic scenes and occupations which he had formerly enjoyed. He no longer could employ himself in reading or fishing—the elegant improvements in his little domains no longer afforded him delight, for he now viewed them, as others had long done, rather as mementoes of extravagant folly than of use. He lost his mornings in wandering from one family to another, listening to idle news, and flirting with forward girls, who liked his gallantries quite as well as if he had been a single man, some of them from the laudable motive of giving pain to his wife, who, by their encouragement of his folly, became

every day more neglected. The absence of Althea at this time was a very serious affliction to Isabella, and would have been equally so to Althea herself, could she have known all the growing evils of her sister's situation. One thing only remained to make her still more uncomfortable, and that was the removal of her mother from her immediate neighbourhood; and this trouble was soon added to the rest. The Lea, where Mrs. Vernon had now for some years resided, was the property of a young man, whom some indiscretions had obliged to dispose of this and other estates during an involuntary exile to another kingdom. Circumstances had changed, and Mr. Molyneux returned to England, accompanied by a *female friend*, and fixed upon the Lea as his own place of residence; and Mrs. Vernon was compelled to quit it. No other place, not even a decent cottage, offered itself as a fit habitation for her, and she was forced to remove, after staying some time with her daughter, to a village at a distance,

which precluded any thing like frequent intercourse.

Poor Isabella was thus left wholly to herself, and had soon more reason to lament this change in her mother's situation than the mere loss of her society and assistance. The Lea became a scene of attraction to Philipson, on more than one account; and his late harmless, though foolish, flirtations with the village Misses were now concentrated, and assumed a much less innocent aspect. Molyneux and Philipson had been at school, and one year at college, together; but there Mr. Molyneux had committed some wild excesses, which procured his expulsion; and soon afterwards greater errors banished him for a time from his native country. This period, if it was of but little advantage to his morals and conduct, was greatly so to his estate; and he was now returned to a much better fortune than he left, but with the errors of youth ripened into the vices of manhood. Unfortunately, he returned to settle near the once favour-



ite companion of his early frolics, and that at a moment when Philipson's unsettled and irritated mind required relaxation, and sought it but too indiscriminately. He found at the Lea good cheer and lively companions; for Mrs. Fermor, the friend and *protégée* of Molyneux, was a very accomplished pleasant woman, of sufficient propriety of manners not to disgust even one more fastidious than Philipson. Here then Isabella's husband spent those hours which she passed alone and in sorrow; for it was not possible she should remain ignorant of the state of Mr. Molyneux's family arrangements. Fading health and failing spirits made her solitary home no longer a scene of pleasure; and even the smiles of her little Althea ceased to afford unmixed delight; but Philipson saw nothing of this, for he was seldom at home, and when there, Isabella rallied her weak spirits; and her pallid cheek and hollow eye he either did not observe, or if he did occasionally remark that she looked ill, he placed it to the nature of her situation,



for she was now very near her second confinement. Althea would hardly be a year old, and this second babe promised to be an unwelcome intruder to all. She found all her efforts inadequate to support her firmness, when she compared the present with the former similar circumstance. Then Philipson was all love and kindness, seeing no object but herself, and studying only how he might, by the most assiduous attention, render her situation less irksome and unpleasant. Then, too, she looked forward to the company of her favourite sister, of whose return from Ireland she now heard no mention, but whom she more than ever languished to see. She knew that by strongly expressing this wish she should obtain it, since nothing but Althea's ignorance of her real state of health and mind could have prevailed on her to be so long absent. Had she surmised the sad truth—could she have for a moment believed such to be Isabella's actual situation, even her engagements with Mrs. Charlton would have given way to

the superior calls of sisterly affection. Bitterly did she afterwards lament what she called Isabella's ill-timed delicacy on this occasion. Mrs. Vernon had promised to be with her daughter during her confinement, and for a few weeks before; and at that time Philipson was more at home, for he felt ashamed to be always found in such society as that now generally gathered together at the Lea. Mrs. Vernon, however, heard too much from her son of the dissipation going on there, and the intimacy between Molyneux and Edward, to be deceived by this temporary suspension of it; but conscious that a mother-in-law has no power, and fearful he should blame Isabella as the informer, if she gave him to understand all she knew, she checked the reproaches and advice which hovered on her lips, though she could not help her manners being cold and constrained towards him. George Vernon and his wife had long ceased any farther intercourse than an occasional call at the vicarage; and this Isabella imputed to the pride of

the latter; but her mother and husband knew better. Long extremely offended with Philipson for his little attention to prudence and economy, George was now completely disgusted and exasperated by this intimacy with people so every way improper. No female society was to be found at the Lea; but rumour began to spread abroad the high favour in which "the parson" stood with the lady who presided there, and which was reported to be far greater than that enjoyed by Mr. Molyneux himself. Fortunately nothing of this had yet reached Mrs. Philipson's ears; and her acquaintance was so small, and she herself so much beloved and respected, that Mrs. Vernon hoped she would escape the hearing of what she still tried to believe was only village scandal. The period at length arrived which brought two pieces of interesting information to Philipson—the birth of a boy, and the death of the rector of Fairfield. He wrote off immediately in the highest spirits to Arlingham an account of both events.

Isabella's danger, for she had been very near dying, had revived those sentiments of tenderness which had almost expired; and the hope of affluence again enlivening his own home, had endeared that home, in idea, to his wandering heart. Arlingham's reply to his letter at last arrived; and those visions of comfort were at once dissolved—the living of Fairfield was given to a “gentleman who would know how to economize its profits, and who had no acquaintance with Mr. Molyneux.”

## CHAPTER XXII.

What did I part with when I gave my heart?  
 I knew not that all happiness went with it.  
 Why did I leave my tender *mother's* wing,  
 And venture into love? The maid that loves  
 Goes out to sea upon a shatter'd plank,  
 And puts her trust in miracles for safety.

YOUNG'S *Revenge*.

No language could accurately delineate Philipson's feelings on the receipt of this letter, which was cool and contemptuous, scarcely deigning a word of apology, and throwing the whole blame of the disappointment on Philipson, whilst Arlingham exculpated himself, or endeavoured to do so, on the score of never having given a positive promise. For some days the shock was so severe, that Philipson could not rise above it sufficiently to stir from home; and Isabella, from whom the fatal truth was at present carefully concealed,



fondly thought it was returning tenderness towards herself that prompted this change of manner and more domestic habits. Philipson had indeed but too much reason for despondency, for he well knew that many of his importunate creditors had been kept quiet only by the promise of payment when this living became his own, and that the first intimation of his disappointment would bring a variety of claimants round him, doubly irritated, under the idea that he had deceived them into more quiet measures by promises he himself had no reason to build upon.

Mrs. Vernon was not less shocked and unhappy than Philipson, for she had not the most distant idea of such an event; and besides the serious inconvenience to the whole family, she was well aware that it must wholly destroy all future friendship and intercourse between them and Arlingham, and consequently, in a great measure, if not entirely, Elizabeth also. She had a great suspicion of Philipson's being a good deal involved in his circum-

stances, though not to the amount he really was, and determined, when the first emotion and irritation of disappointment had a little subsided, to question him, and, if possible, relieve his wants, by a sacrifice of some of her own little property. But he knew too well the impossibility of her affording him any very material assistance to unfold the history of his real situation; and though he consented to borrow of her two hundred pounds, which gave him a temporary breathing-time, he felt that it could only be a very transient relief.

The information of this cruel conduct on the part of Arlingham was, of course, necessarily imparted to poor Isabella, when she had regained such a portion of strength as enabled her to hear it without danger, and dreadfully was she affected by it. Though ignorant of the extent of their embarrassments, she knew they were heavy; and judging of the future effect such a situation would have on her husband by that she had already lamented, she gave way almost to despair, as she anticipated

only additional gloominess at home, and a greater desire of dissipating uneasy sensations in company she found it impossible to approve. She knew now that some hundreds of their originally-small property had been taken up, and she felt herself almost unable to struggle against the horrors of a lessened income, an increasing family, a load of debts, and a husband's moroseness, which she had found, by sad experience, augmented as the necessity of additional kindness became more apparent, to enable her to bear the accumulated load of evil.

In this distress the friendship of Mr. Molyneux was, for the first time, of use; for to him Philipson freely disclosed his situation, and was by him accommodated with money sufficient for his present exigency. But this only increased the difficulty in future, and lessened still more his already-contracted income, by loading it with interest for the sums thus borrowed, and by throwing him still more into the dangerous society of this profligate man,

destroyed his chance for recovering the domestic happiness he every day forfeited still farther. Molyneux demanded the full price of his late exertions, and Philipson found himself entangled in a vicious society, which he had hardly the power to avoid, without giving offence to a man who had neither feeling or delicacy to deter him from perpetual allusions to the benefit he had recently conferred, and the gratitude he expected in return. Conscious of the trouble and difficulties in which his imprudent concealment of his early entanglements had involved Isabella, and touched by her placid and uncomplaining endurance of them, Philipson would, at this time, fain have returned wholly to share and lighten them, but this was not permitted; and in addition to the boisterous claims of Molyneux, Mrs. Fermor preferred hers also, and assailed him more successfully by her charms, her blandishments, and her flattery. *This* part of the business he endeavoured most strenu-



ously to conceal from Isabella, and placed his continual visits at the Lea, which sometimes lasted three or four days, to the necessity he was under of keeping well with a man to whom he was so greatly obliged. Isabella was then ignorant of the real inducement for these long visits, but the dreadful truth was not always concealed.

Mrs. Vernon was better informed; and to keep her deceived daughter still in ignorance, prolonged her stay at the vicarage much beyond the time she originally intended; nor would she have quitted her when she did, but for a hasty summons to Randolph Castle, Harriet not being expected to survive a terrible illness, which had destroyed all present hopes of an heir to that noble estate. Mrs. Vernon could not refuse such a request, and Isabella was most reluctantly obliged to spare her. Before she went, however, she wrote to Mrs. Charlton, whose affairs she found had taken a favourable turn, and who might perhaps now be able to send or bring Althea to



England, from whence she had been absent many months longer than she had at first expected. It was now the latter end of July, and Althea had quitted England in January. How much had happened to herself and Isabella since then!

The departure of Mrs. Vernon seemed the signal for the consummation of her daughter's distresses. Her presence had hitherto checked the impertinent condolences of affected friendship, and the cruel communications of pretended sympathy; but once left to herself, the coast was clear; and Mrs. Ogilvie, with the infernal haste of malignity, and envy of former happiness, after much circumlocution, and professions of the best intentions, proceeded to inform Isabella, that Mr. Philipson had certainly superseded Mr. Molyneux in the good graces of the infamous Mrs. Fermor.

Isabella, though shocked and distressed almost beyond concealment, coolly avowed her disbelief of such information, and with

a heart bursting with anguish, persisted in vindicating the character of her husband from so foul a charge.

Mrs. Ogilvie was highly indignant at her word being doubted; and mortified at being foiled (as she believed) in her endeavours of making "her sweet young friend, for whom her heart bled," unhappy, she proceeded to adduce proof on proof, till Isabella, with dignified composure, painfully assumed for the moment, bade her desist from such cruel and fruitless efforts to infuse suspicion into her mind, and instantly to leave the house, and enter it no more, desiring her, at the same time, to beware how she spread still farther such vile falsehoods, lest Philipson should be provoked to a legal revenge. Mrs. Ogilvie was too well assured of the truth of her assertions to fear such conduct on his part, and vowed an ample revenge for the treatment she affected deeply to resent, on the part of the trusting fool she had vainly endeavoured to render miserable.

But not in vain had really been her ma-

lice. Isabella had before suspected something of this nature, for she had twice seen letters directed to her husband, in a female hand, from the Lea; and one of these, which she accidentally found, was worded in a style sufficiently ambiguous to alarm affection like hers. Still, however, she had endeavoured to shut her eyes, and persuade herself that she had misinterpreted the meaning of the words she had read, and no look or word gave Philipson reason to suspect for a moment that she had ever believed him so lost to honour and faith. But now this recollected letter gave a sort of painful appearance of truth to Mrs. Ogilvie's information, and she knew not how to doubt, though she shuddered in agony to believe.

Jealousy formed no part of Isabella's character, and indeed the unbounded affection and high opinion she entertained of her husband had hitherto effectually preserved her from this passion. Nor even now, when forced to exchange this perfect

confidence for some degree of doubt, at least, could her feelings be called jealous. They were, however, of a very miserable description, and such as she knew not how to endure. However anxious to doubt such heart-rending information, she could not help combining circumstances, and they forced on her mind a degree of terrible conviction, and certainly induced a kind of watchfulness on her part, in order to catch at any occurrence which might banish or corroborate suspicion; and this close observation too soon ended in a confirmation of all she most dreaded, yet hesitated to believe. Convinced that Philipson was not of a temper to be reclaimed by reproaches or ill-humour, and feeling indeed too wretched to complain, she concealed from him, and from every one, the anguish which preyed upon her heart, and received him, when he did come home, with a complacency which gave him no excuse for absenting himself. But the effort was made with extreme difficulty, and the effects of such exertion became daily

more and more visible in her altered looks. Her health gradually decayed; and when, at the end of August, Althea returned to England, she hardly recognised, in the meagre spectre before her, the blooming Isabella she had known only two short years back.

We must now leave her for the present, and retrace the events which marked Althea's sojournment in Ireland for the last four months.

END OF VOL. II.



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

PRINTED FOR

**A. K. NEWMAN & CO.**

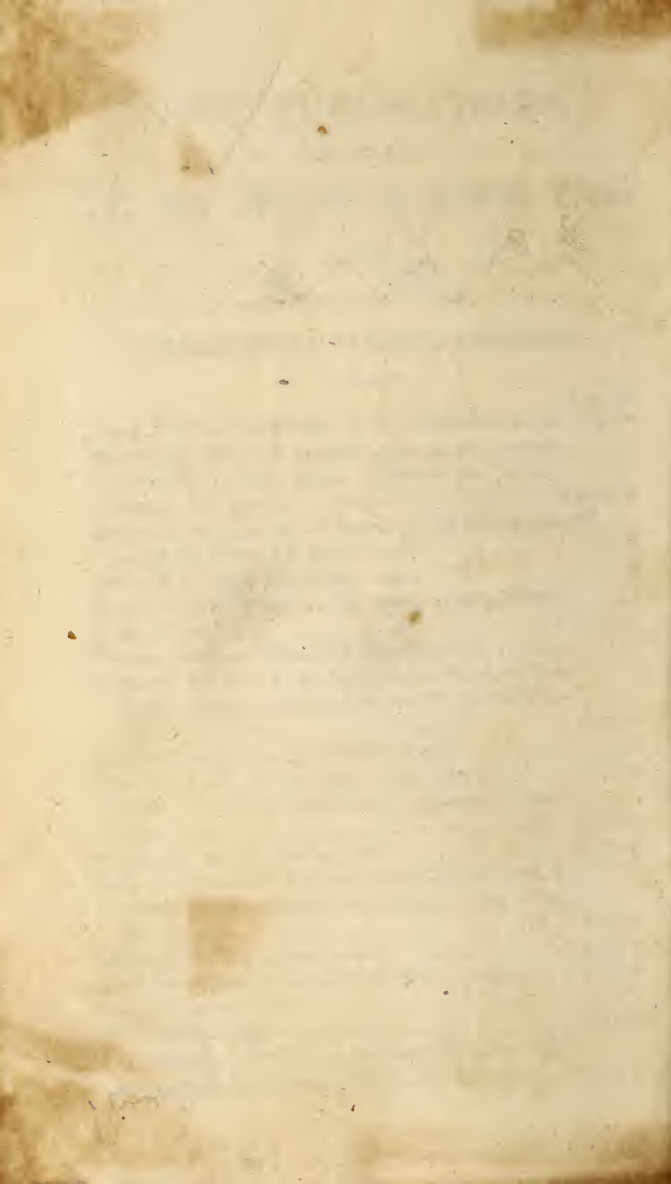
AT THE

*Minerva Press,*

**LEADENHALL-STREET, LONDON.**

|                                                                                                                                    | £ | s. | d. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|----|
| Love, Mystery, and Misery, by A. F. Holstein, 2 vols                                                                               | 0 | 10 | 0  |
| The Modern Villa and Ancient Castle, or the Peer and Alderman, by Miss Byron, Author of the English-woman, &c. 3 vols.....         | 0 | 15 | 0  |
| Festival of St. Jago, by the Author of the Private History of the Court of England, 2 vols .....                                   | 0 | 10 | 0  |
| Arthur Fitz-Albini, 3d edition, 2 vols.....                                                                                        | 0 | 9  | 0  |
| Louisa, or the Cottage on the Moor, by Mrs. Helme, 7th edition, 2 vols .....                                                       | 0 | 10 | 0  |
| Woman, or Ida of Athens, by Miss Owenson, 4 vols..                                                                                 | 1 | 1  | 0  |
| Nocturnal Minstrel, or the Spirit of the Wood, by Mrs. Sleath, Author of the Bristol Heiress, Who's the Murderer? &c. 2 vols. .... | 0 | 10 | 0  |
| Castle of Arragon, by Miss Smith, 4 vols. ....                                                                                     | 1 | 0  | 0  |
| The Grey Friar and Black Spirit of the Wye, 2 vols....                                                                             | 0 | 10 | 0  |
| Alphonso, or the Natural Son, by Madame Genlis, 3 vols .....                                                                       | 0 | 13 | 6  |
| Euphronia, by Mrs. Norris, 3 vols. ....                                                                                            | 0 | 15 | 0  |
| Houses of Osma and Almeria, or the Convent of St. Ildefonso, by the Author of the Children of the Abbey, &c. 3 vols.....           | 0 | 18 | 0  |
| Mysteries of Ferney Castle, 4 vols.....                                                                                            | 1 | 2  | 0  |
| The Beau Monde, or Scenes in High Life, 3 vols.....                                                                                | 0 | 15 | 0  |
| Rosa in London, 4 vols. ....                                                                                                       | 1 | 2  | 0  |
| Celia Suited, 3 vols.....                                                                                                          | 0 | 12 | 0  |
| The Assassin of St. Glenroy, by Anthony Frederic Holstein, Author of Owen Glendowr, &c. 4 vols .....                               | 1 | 0  | 0  |





400  
100  
250

750



